

## The importance of parents' involvement in their child's learning

“Parental involvement in the form of ‘at home good parenting’ has a significant positive effect on children’s achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation.”

Professor Charles Desforges, 2003



# Advantages to parental engagement

Secures vital support for the child's learning

Provides a balanced view of the child

Helps the child and adults around them to change

Improves the child's behaviour and attendance

Enhances attainment and self-confidence of the child

Encourages parents' participation in school activities

Enhances communication between child, parent and teacher

Parents are likely to be the best experts on their child

Increases parents' confidence in the school and its staff



# Activity 1

## **Encouraging and supporting parent' involvement in their child's learning**

Plan one activity or strategy for encouraging parents to be involved in their child's learning (this should be something parents can do in the home environment).

Consider:

- What is the activity/strategy?
- What would you/other people need to do?
- What resources would be needed?
- Which area of learning would be focused on?
- How does it encourage parental involvement (mothers and fathers)?
- What might be the expected outcome? For the parent? For the child?



# The challenges some parents face

**In supporting their child's learning, some parents face particular challenges, such as:**

- low levels of literacy, language and numeracy skills and confidence
- English as a second or additional language
- cultural and social differences in attitudes towards education
- poor health and/or disability
- poverty
- time pressures



# Exploring and using existing links

Type of involvement	Examples
Parenting	Providing housing, health, nutrition, safety; Parenting skills in parent-child interactions; Home conditions to support study; Information to help schools know child
Communicating	School / home and home / school communication
Volunteering	In school help in classrooms and events
Teaching at home	Help with homework; Help with educational choices / options
Decision making	Membership of PTA / governors
Collaborating with the community	Contributions to school



# The challenges of making and maintaining links


## Parental factors:

- Unaware of their significance to their child's learning
- Lacking skills, insight and knowledge to support their child's learning
- Ill-equipped to cope with authority due to their own poor experiences
- Apprehensive of any contact with agencies
- Lacking in language and other social skills to engage with formal agencies
- See no value in formal education

## Agency factors:

- Bureaucracy
- Time and timing
- Formality
- Policies
- Unwelcoming
- Prescriptive

## Other factors, eg.

- Work
  - Poverty
  - Addiction
  - Homelessness
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## Activity 2

Addressing challenges to making and maintaining links

In small groups:

1. In small groups review the challenges on the activity sheets.
2. For each challenge consider:
  - What does the school do currently to address the challenge?
  - What more might be done to address these challenges?
3. Are there any additional challenges in your school?



# Brokerage

## **Effective brokerage is likely to involve:**

- always putting the parent at the centre
- developing effective partnerships with other agencies and the community
- working in partnership with the voluntary sector
- setting up networks
- developing knowledge about the services available to young people
- developing knowledge about the roles and responsibilities of other agencies.

## **Brokerage model:**

- Assessing
- Planning
- Liaising
- Asking
- Advocating
- Negotiating



# Communication between parents and school

- Newsletters
- School profile containing facts and information about the school
- School website containing information about student policies, staffing, calendar, parenting events, and prospectus
- Parental questionnaires
- Attendance certificates
- Individual interim reports
- Individual annual reports.
- Parents' evenings
- Ad hoc comments in planner
- Phone calls
- Letters
- Open evenings
- Parents' association
- Special awards
- Celebratory events
- Social events.



# Family learning

**There is evidence that family learning impacts positively on pupils, parents, the school and its community (NIACE, 2006)**

**Family learning adds value to a wide range of activities that your school will be doing as part of its extended services**

**Family learning is a natural partner to a school's extended services**



# Activity 3

## Planning a family learning event

1. In groups of 4 plan a family learning event for case study 1 or 2
2. Include:
  - A fun engagement activity
  - An activity to support the child's formal learning in school
  - An activity that makes the most of the families existing skills and interests
3. Consider:
  - Planning and preparation
  - Programme (eg how long? When?)
  - Recruitment
  - Resources
  - Evaluation
  - Progression
4. Present your idea to the group in a suitable format