

Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning

School Assessment Tool (Reflection Matrix)

The purpose of the School Assessment Tool

The *School Assessment Tool* has been developed to assist members of the school community (students, parents, staff and community members) assess current family and community engagement practices and to evaluate their progress when implementing strategies to strengthen engagement.

This tool has been developed to align with the seven key dimensions of effective practice identified by the *Family-School Partnerships Framework – A guide for schools and families (2008)*.

By using the *School Assessment Tool*, schools will be able to identify where they are placed on a continuum of engagement and where work can be celebrated and further developed.

Elements of the *School Assessment Tool* (pages 5-11)

1. The seven dimensions

The *Family-School Partnership Framework* classifies activities into seven key dimensions. The dimensions provide the basic structure of the *School Assessment Tool*. They describe how school communities can strengthen engagement with families and the community to improve student learning outcomes. This diagram shows one of the dimensions.

3. Elements of effective practice

Examples of effective practice to achieve the intended outcome for the dimension. Four examples of effective practice have been provided for each dimension.

2. Outcome statement

Outcome statements provide schools with guidance about the types of practices and behaviours the school could achieve. The outcomes can be measured or evaluated through the collection of data or observation.

Dimension 1: Communicating

Effective communication is a two-way exchange between families and schools that involves information sharing and opportunities for schools and families to learn about each other.

Outcome

Effective two-way communication between families and schools using a range of strategies to regularly seek and share information about students' achievements and learning needs, school policies, practices and community initiatives.

Throughout this tool, the stages of engagement build on each other, assuming that good practices at the *Developing* and *Building* stage will progress to the *Sustaining* stage.

Elements of effective practice	Stage of engagement			Your current stage
	Developing	Building	Sustaining	
Using a variety of methods to seek and share information	The parent representative body and school keep families informed of upcoming events in a variety of ways, including regular print and electronic notices, in the languages spoken in the community. <i>For example, the school uses newsletters, fliers, e-mail, automated phone calls, and text messages in the home languages of families as needed.</i>	School staff collaborates with the parent representative body to develop connections with families through multiple two-way communication tools, including personal calls, e-mails and notes. <i>For example, parents who are not fluent in English are given up-to-date information through bilingual staff or parent volunteers who are available at times convenient for these families.</i>	Families, the community, and school staff communicate in numerous interactive ways, both formally and informally. <i>For example, school and parent leaders take part in community forums, use appropriate forms of media, including community radio and newspapers, and networks, including online social networking, to engage parents.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Reporting student achievements in culturally sensitive and respectful ways	Information about student achievement is clearly communicated to families in relevant community languages. <i>For example, interpreters are used during parent-teacher interviews.</i>	Teachers implement a systematic effort to maximise family participation at parent-teacher meetings. <i>For example, translating information into community languages, holding the meetings at a variety of locations, offering flexible times, follow-up telephone calls to parents who do not reply to invitations.</i>	School in collaboration with the parent representative body offers information to families to assist them to participate collaboratively in parent teacher conversations. <i>For example, a calendar of meetings to review assessments and testing programs, such as NAPLAN, is published at the commencement of the school year.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Consulting with all families to identify issues and concerns within the school	Leaders of the parent representative body and representatives from the school staff complete a parent involvement survey. The results guide the development of parent involvement programs. <i>For example, the executive of the parent representative body and the principal meet to discuss the survey results and plan strategies to address the findings.</i>	The parent survey is translated into multiple languages and communicated in various ways, including in person, online, in print and by phone, and made available to all families. Results are posted on the school's website and discussed. <i>For example, the parent representative body organises a range of activities to discuss survey results with families and seek additional feedback.</i>	Parent survey results are reflected in the school plan. <i>For example, programs, policies and practices are developed collaboratively by students, teachers, school leaders, families and community members to meet the needs of families as identified in the survey.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Ensuring that all families have access to school leaders	School leaders have a visible presence within the school. <i>For example, school leaders make a point of being at the school's entrance when families drop-off/pick-up their children.</i>	The principal and other school leaders meet regularly with parents in small groups or one-to-one as needed, in school and in different community locations. <i>For example, school leaders and leaders of the parent representative body organise meetings with families at various sites to discuss issues such as homework expectations and changes to school policy.</i>	The school has formal and informal structures to support families to hold conversations with school leaders. <i>For example, the school provides families with a range of contact options and operates an 'open door' policy for families.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know

Overall rating

Not here yet
 Developing
 Building
 Sustaining
 Don't know

5. The matrix

The matrix combines the descriptions for each element of effective practice, with examples, across the three stages of engagement.

4. Stages of engagement

The three stages, *Developing*, *Building*, *Sustaining*, within each dimension represent a continuum of engagement.

6. Overall rating for the dimension

On completion of the matrix schools will be able to clearly identify and rate their current stage of engagement for the dimension after all statements in the matrix have been considered.

1. Getting started

Effective use of this tool requires participation by the whole school community—students, families, school staff and members of the community.

The assessment of school practice can be made by individuals, teacher groups, family groups, student groups or by the whole school community.

It is important to gain an understanding of how the school is operating across the seven dimensions before taking any action.

Step 3: Repeat steps 1 and 2 for the other three statements of effective practice.

2. Individual assessment

Step 1: Start with the first element of effective practice, then read the descriptions for the three stages.

Read the examples to get a sense of what school practice might be at the different stages. As you read the statements, ask yourself: **Is this statement true of my school?**

- If you haven't enough information or knowledge to properly answer, select **Don't know** at the end of the row in the rating column and move down to the next element of effective practice.
- If you think the statement is **not true** or there is **very little evidence** of this practice, select **Not here yet** at the end of the row in the rating column and move down to the next element of effective practice.

Dimension 1: Communicate

Effective communication is a two-way exchange between families and schools that involves information sharing and opportunities for schools and families to learn about each other.

Outcome

Effective two-way communication between families and school using a range of strategies to regularly seek and share information about students' achievements and learning needs, school policies, practices and community initiatives.

Throughout this tool, the stages of engagement build on each other, assuming that good practices at the *Developing* and *Building* stage will progress to the *Sustaining* stage.

Elements of effective practice	Stage of engagement			Your current stage
	Developing	Building	Sustaining	
Using a variety of communication methods to seek and share information	The parent representative body and school keep families informed of upcoming events in a variety of ways, including regular print and electronic notices, in the languages spoken in the community. <i>For example, the school uses newsletters, fliers, e-mail, automated phone calls, and text messages in the home languages of families as needed.</i>	School staff collaborates with the parent representative body to develop connections with families through multiple two-way communication tools, including personal calls, e-mails and notes. <i>For example, parents who are not fluent in English are given up-to-date information through bilingual staff or parent volunteers who are available at times convenient for these families.</i>	Families, the community, and school staff communicate in numerous interactive ways, both formally and informally. <i>For example, school and parent leaders take part in community forums, use appropriate forms of media, including community radio and newspapers, and networks, including online social networking, to engage parents.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Reporting student achievements in culturally sensitive and respectful ways	Information about student achievement is clearly communicated to families in relevant community languages. <i>For example, interpreters are used during parent-teacher interviews.</i>	Teachers implement a systematic effort to maximise family participation at parent-teacher meetings. <i>For example, translating information into community languages, holding the meetings at a variety of locations, offering flexible times, follow-up telephone calls to parents who do not reply to invitations.</i>	School in collaboration with the parent representative body offers information to families to assist them to participate collaboratively in parent teacher conversations. <i>For example, a calendar of meetings to review assessments and testing programs, such as NAPLAN, is published at the commencement of the school year.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Consulting with all families to identify issues and concerns within the school	Leaders of the parent representative body and representatives from the school staff complete a parent involvement survey. The results guide the development of parent involvement programs. <i>For example, the executive of the parent representative body and the principal meet to discuss the survey results and plan strategies to address the findings.</i>	The parent survey is translated into multiple languages and communicated in various ways, including in person, online, in print and by phone, and made available to all families. Results are posted on the school's website and discussed. <i>For example, the parent representative body organises a range of activities to discuss survey results with families and seek additional feedback.</i>	Parent survey results are reflected in the school plan. <i>For example, programs, policies and practices are developed collaboratively by students, teachers, school leaders, families and community members to meet the needs of families as identified in the survey.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Ensuring that all families have access to school leaders	School leaders have a visible presence within the school. <i>For example, school leaders make a point of being at the school's entrance when families drop-off/pick-up their children.</i>	The principal and other school leaders meet regularly with parents in small groups or one-to-one as needed, in school and in different community locations. <i>For example, school leaders and leaders of the parent representative body organise meetings with families at various sites to discuss issues such as homework expectations and changes to school policy.</i>	The school has formal and informal structures to support families to hold conversations with school leaders. <i>For example, the school provides families with a range of contact options and operates an 'open door' policy for families.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know

Overall rating

Not here yet
 Developing
 Building
 Sustaining
 Don't know

Step 2: If you think the statement is true, read on to the next stage.

Ask yourself the question again: Is this statement true of my school?

- If you answer **No**, then **go back** to the previous stage and highlight that cell, select **Developing** in the last column. Move down to the next element of effective practice.
- If you answer **Yes**, read on to the next stage. Once again, ask yourself the question: **Is this statement true of my school?**
 - If you answer **No**, then **go back** to the previous stage and highlight that cell, select **Building** in the last column. Move down to the next element of effective practice.
 - If you answer **Yes**, highlight this cell, select **Sustaining** in the last column and then move down to the next element.

Step 4: Decide the overall rating for the dimension

– look to see which stage, **Developing, Building or Sustaining**, has the most highlights, or whether **Not here yet or Don't know** reflects your thinking. **Shade** the appropriate box in the **Overall rating** column.

Note: In the event of two stages having the same number of highlights, it is suggested that you draw on any knowledge you have of other practices in the school related to this Dimension to help you determine the most appropriate stage.

Step 5: Reread the statements in the dimension and use the *Analysing current practice proforma* (page 12) to record any effective practices that are already evident at your school; note those that are working well and those that need more work. This information will be useful when determining priorities for further action.

Step 6: On the *Individual assessment sheet proforma* (page 13) **shade** the column of the selected dimension to indicate the stage you think your school community has reached. You can shade all or part of the column, for example, a quarter, half or two thirds to give a clearer idea of where you think your school community is now.

Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning
Analysing current practice proforma - can be used with Step 2

Dimension	What are our current practices?	What is working well?	What needs more work?
1. Communicating			
2. Connecting learning at school and at home			
3. Building community and identity			
4. Recognising the role of the family			
5. Consultative decision-making			
6. Collaborating beyond the school			
7. Participating			

Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning
Individual assessment sheet proforma

About you

Name.....

(Tick one)

Parent/family member School leader

Student Community member

Staff

Step 1: Record your answers from the *School Assessment Tool*

	Communicating	Connecting learning at home and at school	Building community and identity	Recognising the role of the family	Consultative decision-making	Collaborating beyond the school	Participating
Sustaining							
Building							
Developing							
Not here yet							
Don't know							

Step 2: In relation to your responses, answer the following questions

1. Which dimension/s is the school already addressing well?	
2. Are there any dimensions where you think the school has not reached the <i>Developing</i> stage (<i>Not here yet</i>)? What are they?	
3. Are there any dimensions where you are unable to offer an opinion (<i>Don't know</i>)? What are they?	
4. Which dimension/s should be a priority for action?	

Optional – as required by workshop facilitator/leader

Step 3: Compare your responses with others near you/at your table/ in the larger group.

5. How do your responses compare with others?	
6. How are your responses the same as other similar people in the group (ie, other parents, other teachers, other students, etc)?	
7. How are your responses different from other similar people in the group?	

Step 7: Repeat Steps 1 to 6 for the other dimensions.

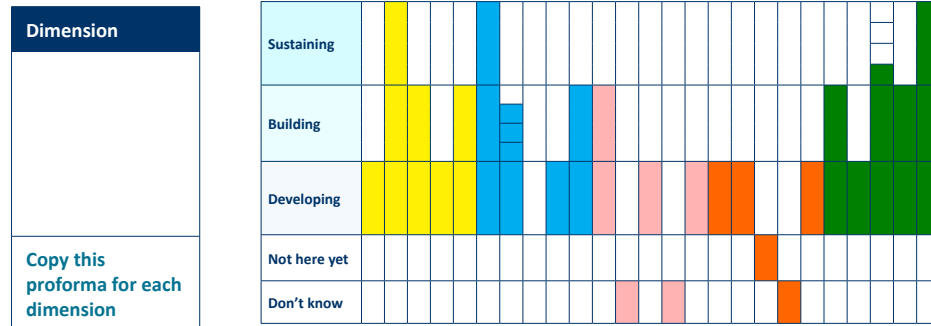
Step 8: Complete questions 1 to 4 on the individual assessment sheet.

Step 9: Be prepared to share your responses with the larger group.

Step 10: (Optional task). Complete questions 5 to 7.

3. Group consensus (For facilitators/workshop leaders)

Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning
Group assessment proforma - for use by workshop facilitator/leader



Copy this proforma for each dimension

- Step 1:** Ask individual participants (or table groups) to report where they think the school is currently at for this dimension.
- Step 2:** Shade in one column for each response. (The facilitator may wish to use a different colour for ■ parents/family ■ staff ■ students ■ community members ■ school leaders.)
- Step 3:** As a group come to a consensus about the school's current stage.
- Step 4:** Record this stage on the *School Profile Overview* sheet.
- Step 5:** Discuss differences in ratings between the different groups. What conclusions can be made?

Step 1: Collate everyone's decision onto the *Group assessment proforma* (page 14)
 (The facilitator may wish to use a different colour for ■ parents/family ■ staff ■ students ■ community members ■ school leaders.)

Step 2: Discuss the range of perceptions and come to a consensus about the school's current stage for the dimension- *Not here yet, Developing, Building, Sustaining or Don't know.*

Alternative process

Depending on the size of the group and time available, facilitators may prefer to set up a continuum along the floor with markers to indicate *Don't know, Not here yet, Developing, Building and Sustaining.*

Step 1: For each Dimension, the facilitator invites participants to take a position along the continuum. If time permits, participants

could be invited to share the reason for their position and given the opportunity to change their position.

Step 2: Discuss the range of perceptions and come to a consensus about the school's current stage for the dimension- *Not here yet, Developing, Building, Sustaining or Don't know.*

Step3 to Step 6: as above.

Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning
School profile overview proforma - for use by workshop facilitator/leader

Step 1: Record the group consensus results from the Group assessment proforma

	Communicating	Connecting learning at home and at school	Building community and identity	Recognising the role of the family	Consultative decision-making	Collaborating beyond the school	Participating
Sustaining							
Building	Yellow						
Developing	Yellow						
Not here yet							
Don't know							

Step 2: Discuss the responses to identify broad trends of the seven dimensions

1. Which dimension/s is the school already addressing well? <i>Are there any groups who disagreed?</i>	
2. Are there any dimensions where the school has not reached the <i>Developing</i> stage (<i>Not here yet</i>)? What are they? <i>Were there specific groups who believed this?</i>	
3. Are there any dimensions where the group was unable to offer an opinion (<i>Don't know</i>)? What are they? <i>Were there specific groups who believed this?</i>	
4. What conclusions can be drawn from the results?	
5. Which dimension/s should be a priority for action?	

Step 3: Record this stage on the *School profile overview proforma* (page 15).

Step 4: Discuss differences in ratings between the different groups. What conclusions can be made?

Step 5: Repeat Steps 1-4 for the remaining six dimensions.

Step 6: As a group respond to questions 1 to 5.

Dimension 1: Communicating

Outcome

Effective communication is a two-way exchange between families and schools that involves information sharing and opportunities for schools and families to learn about each other.

Effective two-way communication between families and school using a range of strategies to regularly seek and share information about students' achievements and learning needs, school policies, practices and community initiatives.

Throughout this tool, the stages of engagement build on each other, assuming that good practices at the *Developing* and *Building* stage will progress to the *Sustaining* stage.

Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning

Elements of effective practice	Stage of engagement			Your current stage
	Developing	Building	Sustaining	
Using a variety of communication methods to seek and share information	The parent representative body and school keep families informed of upcoming events in a variety of ways, including regular print and electronic notices, in the languages spoken in the community. <i>For example, the school uses newsletters, fliers, e-mail, automated phone calls, and text messages in the home languages of families as needed.</i>	School staff collaborates with the parent representative body to develop connections with families through multiple two-way communication tools, including personal calls, e-mails and notes. <i>For example, parents who are not fluent in English are given up-to-date information through bilingual staff or parent volunteers who are available at times convenient for these families.</i>	Families, the community, and school staff communicate in numerous interactive ways, both formally and informally. <i>For example, school and parent leaders take part in community forums, use appropriate forms of media, including community radio and newspapers, and networks, including online social networking, to engage parents.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Reporting student achievements in culturally sensitive and respectful ways	Information about student achievement is clearly communicated to families in relevant community languages. <i>For example, interpreters are used during parent-teacher interviews.</i>	Teachers implement a systematic effort to maximise family participation at parent-teacher meetings. <i>For example, translating information into community languages, holding the meetings at a variety of locations, offering flexible times, follow-up telephone calls to parents who do not reply to invitations.</i>	School in collaboration with the parent representative body offers information to families to assist them to participate collaboratively in parent teacher conversations. <i>For example, a calendar of meetings to review assessments and testing programs, such as NAPLAN, is published at the commencement of the school year.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Consulting with all families to identify issues and concerns within the school	Leaders of the parent representative body and representatives from the school staff complete a parent involvement survey. The results guide the development of parent involvement programs. <i>For example, the executive of the parent representative body and the principal meet to discuss the survey results and plan strategies to address the findings.</i>	The parent survey is translated into multiple languages and communicated in various ways, including in person, online, in print and by phone, and made available to all families. Results are posted on the school's website and discussed. <i>For example, the parent representative body organises a range of activities to discuss survey results with families and seek additional feedback.</i>	Parent survey results are reflected in the school plan. <i>For example, programs, policies and practices are developed collaboratively by students, teachers, school leaders, families and community members to meet the needs of families as identified in the survey.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Ensuring that all families have access to school leaders	School leaders have a visible presence within the school. <i>For example, school leaders make a point of being at the school's entrance when families drop-off/pick-up their children.</i>	The principal and other school leaders meet regularly with parents in small groups or one-to-one as needed, in school and in different community locations. <i>For example, school leaders and leaders of the parent representative body organise meetings with families at various sites to discuss issues such as homework expectations and changes to school policy.</i>	The school has formal and informal structures to support families to hold conversations with school leaders. <i>For example, the school provides families with a range of contact options and operates an 'open door' policy for families.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know

Overall rating



Not here yet



Developing



Building



Sustaining



Don't know

Dimension 2: Connecting learning at home and at school Outcome

Connections between families and school that promote student learning and high expectations from both teachers and family contribute to students' success at school.

Families and the school share responsibility for student learning and wellbeing. They work together to create positive attitudes to learning, develop shared understandings of how children learn and learning programs and build on families' capacity to support learning at home.

Throughout this tool, the stages of engagement build on each other, assuming that good practices at the *Developing* and *Building* stage will progress to the *Sustaining* stage.

Elements of effective practice	Stage of engagement			Your current stage
	Developing	Building	Sustaining	
Providing multiple opportunities for all families and teachers to discuss students social and academic progress	Families can contact teachers in person or through e-mail, notes or phone and receive a timely response. Teachers make personal contact with all parents at the beginning of the year to establish positive relationships. <i>For example, teachers send home a welcome note to all families inviting their comments and providing an e-mail address or phone number.</i>	Teachers and school leaders regularly contact families with positive news as well as concerns about their children. Families have an easy way to communicate with teachers on a regular basis. <i>For example, the school has a website where student work and other school wide events are posted. Parents can ask general questions or organise meetings with teachers as needed.</i>	Teachers and families discuss students' individual learning styles, family cultural experiences, strengths, and academic and personal needs, then develop learning goals to support academic success at school and at home. <i>For example, families, students and teachers are involved in the development of individual learning plans for students.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Supporting families to participate in their child's learning	The school offers programs to parents that will help promote learning in the home. <i>For example, the school offers a series of year-based workshops to help parents better understand what is taught in mathematics.</i>	The school provides families with tools to support student learning in a variety of settings. <i>For example, information packages for families of students participating in community based programs include strategies to support their child's learning. .</i>	Teachers and parent representative body leaders plan regular family learning events at school and community locations. <i>For example, workshops on a variety of topics that help parents support learning are held in a community centre during lunchtime or at a childcare centre late in the afternoon.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Developing families' understanding of learning programs and expected learning outcomes	Student work is displayed throughout the school in a way that shows how it meets academic standards. <i>For example, teachers display students' writing tasks to demonstrate how students used skills such as clear and concise language, proper spelling and grammar.</i>	Teachers explain to families what students are learning throughout the year and what good work looks like for the student's stage of learning. <i>For example, teachers maintain portfolios of student's work for parents to view at key times during the year.</i>	Teachers and families have regular, scheduled discussions about how each school program or activity links to student learning. <i>For example, teachers and families discuss the various curriculum outcomes addressed by student participation in the annual school concert.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Smoothing transitions for students and families at key points in the education continuum	Programs are conducted to help prepare students and families for the next step in schooling. <i>For example, a primary school collaborates with the local high school to implement a transition program for families and students.</i>	School staff, students and parent leaders reach out to new students and their families, offering an orientation to the school, opportunities to participate in school activities and to meet other students and families. <i>For example, student leaders assign 'buddies' to new students and the parent representative body connects families to parent mentors.</i>	A transition program developed by the parent representative body leaders and school staff helps families feel connected and remain involved as their children progress through school. <i>For example, information sessions explain how expectations, teaching approaches and learning skills change from primary to junior secondary to senior secondary and to tertiary study.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know

Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning

Overall rating



Not here yet



Developing



Building



Sustaining



Don't know

Dimension 3: Building community and identity

Inclusive school policies, practices and programs build a culture of welcome, inclusion and belonging for all families that reflects and respects diversity within the school's community.

Outcome

School policies and practices, learning activities and community building initiatives have built a culture of welcome, inclusion and belonging that reflects and respects the diversity within the school community.

Throughout this tool, the stages of engagement build on each other, assuming that good practices at the *Developing* and *Building* stage will progress to the *Sustaining* stage.

Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning

Elements of effective practice	Stage of engagement			Your current stage
	Developing	Building	Sustaining	
Developing strong relationships with all families	Families are made feel welcome when they enter the school. <i>For example, a staff member, using the family's home language, gives new families information about the school and a tour of the school.</i>	Family volunteers work in the front office to provide information and support to families and schools. <i>For example, a help desk is established and staffed by family volunteers, fluent in various community languages.</i>	The school employs a liaison officer to help families and community members become more engaged in school. <i>For example, the liaison officer calls new families to invite them to attend school activities, offering to pick them up or meet them at the front of the school.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Creating a family-friendly atmosphere	The school is easy for visitors to navigate, and the community knows what is going on at the school. <i>For example, signs clearly direct visitors to the front office and an outside noticeboard keeps the community informed of upcoming events.</i>	The school is welcoming to families and community members. <i>For example, morning teas playgroups and other activities scheduled for families to meet staff, learn what is happening at school and celebrate children's learning.</i>	The school is a welcoming place where all families can drop in and connect with school staff and other families. <i>For example, the school's parent representative body and staff together create a family resource centre, with information in various languages about the school and community, and staffed with family volunteers or school staff.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Facilitating connections between families	The school takes steps to help families get to know other families in the school. <i>For example, the school organises welcome social events throughout the year and maintains a school blog for parents to stay connected.</i>	The parent representative body provides opportunities for families to get to know each other. <i>For example, the parent representative body's newsletters provide information about its activities and strategies to help families build networks.</i>	The parent representative body and school staff jointly develop programs to help parents connect with each other. <i>For example, the parent representative body collaborates with school staff to jointly plan an orientation program at the beginning of the year and distributes a calendar and school wide directory with staff and parent listings.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Respecting and celebrating the diversity within the school community	Teachers ensure that resources, classroom lessons and activities are inclusive of the diversity within the school community. <i>For example, Aboriginal Education committees are involved in planning and implementing Aboriginal studies and education programs.</i>	School, families and community members work together to celebrate the diversity within the school. <i>For example, the school community coordinates a whole school approach to a specific day for celebrating the diversity within the school such as on Harmony Day.</i>	School collaborates with families and community agencies representing all backgrounds to improve cultural understandings. <i>For example, the school and community jointly deliver Cultural Awareness training for staff.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know

Overall rating



Not here yet



Developing



Building



Sustaining



Don't know

Dimension 4: Recognising the role of the family

Families, as the first and continuing educators of their children, assist and encourage their children's learning in and out of school and support school goals, directions and ethos.

Outcome

School policies, practices and programs acknowledge families as partners in their children's education. Schools recognise and build on the capacity of families to assist and encourage their children's learning in and out of school and support school goals, directions and ethos.

Throughout this tool, the stages of engagement build on each other, assuming that good practices at the *Developing* and *Building* stage will progress to the *Sustaining* stage.

Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning

Elements of effective practice	Stage of engagement			Your current stage
	Developing	Building	Sustaining	
Valuing and building on families' knowledge of their children	Teachers consult with families at the beginning of the year about their child's goals, strengths and talents. <i>For example, teachers send a written survey in relevant community languages home with the child.</i>	The school uses information provided by families to develop individual learning plans and school activities. <i>For example, a teacher and local community member organises an after-school chess club for students and interested families.</i>	Schools and families work together to develop strategies to use in the home to build on students' strengths. <i>For example, successful programs are written up as a resource for other families and schools.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Recognising and supporting the needs of families	Teachers consult with families to find out what would help them to support their child's learning at home. <i>For example, teachers send a written survey in relevant community languages home with the child.</i>	Schools provide culturally appropriate resources in relevant community languages to support families with their child's learning. <i>For example, bilingual numeracy and literacy resources are developed and made available to families.</i>	School, families and community agencies collaborate to develop a program of activities to support families. <i>For example, a series of information sessions and workshops on parenting related topics is delivered by professionals in the field of child development.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Removing barriers to family involvement	School consults with families to find out what would help them to support their child's learning at school or at home. <i>For example, the school uses staff and members of the parent body with multi-lingual skills to conduct a telephone survey of families.</i>	The school uses the results of the consultation to develop strategies to remove barriers to family and community engagement in school activities. <i>For example, interpreter services, transport and childcare are made available.</i>	The school collaborates with the parent representative body to review school and representative body policies and programs to ensure that barriers to family involvement are eliminated. <i>For example, students are given choice of technology options, depending on availability, to complete learning tasks at home.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Acknowledging the critical role of families in their child's learning	Teachers find out what they can do to help parents support their children's learning at home. <i>For example, Homework sheets contain a brief outline of the expected outcomes of the tasks, and include opportunities for feedback from families and students.</i>	Families have input into the school's homework and assessment policy. <i>For example, homework and assessment tasks include interactive activities that show parents and families how they can use everyday activities to support learning.</i>	The school makes its facilities and resources available outside school hours for homework and study. <i>For example, the school opens the library or computer room for afternoon or evening homework sessions where families can assist their children and gain support from teachers.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know

Overall rating



Not here yet



Developing



Building



Sustaining



Don't know

Dimension 5: Consultative decision-making Outcome

Families play meaningful roles in the school decision-making processes through parent representative bodies, committees and other forums.

Families and community members are active contributors to school decision making and planning processes. They engage in relevant decisions about supporting student learning, school policy and practice and community building initiatives.

Throughout this tool, the stages of engagement build on each other, assuming that good practices at the *Developing* and *Building* stage will progress to the *Sustaining* stage.

Elements of effective practice	Stage of engagement			Your current stage
	Developing	Building	Sustaining	
Ensuring that all families have a voice in decisions that affect their children	The school informs families about issues or proposed changes, and gives them an opportunity to respond. <i>For example, the school informs families in advance about changes in school activities, and offers contact information in case families have questions.</i>	Family and community networks are used by the school to involve families in relevant decision making. <i>For example, the school has strong links with local community groups who provide advice about Aboriginal education or resources for culturally and linguistically diverse communities and uses these links to reach out to families.</i>	The school develops a policy to ensure that parents have an equal voice in all relevant decisions that affect children. <i>For example, the policy establishes a mechanism for parent initiated suggestions to change policy and review programs.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Involving families and community members in whole-school planning and evaluation processes	School uses a variety of strategies to seek input and involvement from families and community members. <i>For example, the school holds focus groups and community discussions throughout the community to identify issues.</i>	The school and parent representative body hosts meetings with families and school personnel about programs and policies to gain their ideas and feedback. <i>For example, meetings are held, at the school and community settings during the day and evening with interpreters as needed, to evaluate the school's literacy program.</i>	The school develops a policy to ensure that families and community members contribute to whole-school planning and evaluation processes. <i>For example, the diversity within the school community is reflected in the composition of all school committees.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Developing an effective parent representative body that represents all families	Schools encourage and support the development of a parent representative body. School and parent leaders reach out to families who are not involved at the school to identify interests, concerns and priorities. <i>For example, parent leaders and school staff meet with families at community gathering spots and activities to build membership of the representative body.</i>	Families from different cultural groups are supported to become involved in the activities of the school representative body. <i>For example, services such as interpreters during meetings, transportation and childcare are consistently provided for school-based events and school events held in community locations.</i>	Parent committee leaders participate in a leadership induction program and attend ongoing leadership training. <i>For example, all parents interested in leadership roles in the school are invited to participate in leadership induction program.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Developing parent leadership capacity	Parent representative body leaders reach out to parents from diverse backgrounds and invite them to become involved in the school. <i>For example, leaders greet families as they bring their children to school events, and get their ideas for family learning activities.</i>	Principal and parent representative body leaders recruit interested families from all backgrounds to volunteer, sit on committees and run for office. <i>For example, leaders survey families to find out their interests and skills, and follow up with opportunities where they might be able to help.</i>	Parents trained to co-facilitate parent workshops. <i>For example, parent leaders are trained in facilitation skills such as brainstorming, role-plays, and small group activities that encourage everyone to speak out.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know

Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning

Overall rating



Not here yet



Developing



Building



Sustaining



Don't know

Dimension 6: Collaborating beyond the school

Developing relationships with government and non-government agencies, community groups, businesses and other educational providers strengthens the ability of schools and families to support their children's learning and development outcomes.

Outcome

School has strategically developed on-going relationships with government and non-government agencies, community groups, businesses and other educational providers which enhance learning opportunities and outcomes for students and families.

Throughout this tool, the stages of engagement build on each other, assuming that good practices at the *Developing* and *Building* stage will progress to the *Sustaining* stage.

Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning

Elements of effective practice	Stage of engagement			Your current stage
	Developing	Building	Sustaining	
Connecting families and students with community resources	School leaders and teachers work with community agencies to identify resources and programs that support student learning. <i>For example, local officials and community leaders are invited to staff meetings to raise staff awareness of resources in the community.</i>	Schools work with the parent representative body to identify families who may not know how to access community resources. <i>For example, a multi-lingual school handbook of community resources is developed and made available to families in the school's resource centre and in community locations such as doctor's surgeries, shopping centres, real estate agents and libraries.</i>	School and community agencies help families better understand student options for additional resources to support their learning needs. <i>For example, a register of the groups and resources available in the community is developed and made available to families through the school and electronically on the school's website.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Providing families with access to community resources	School staff collects information for families about community resources. <i>For example, the school office and community room has a notice board and resource table with brochures about local training colleges, health services, sports teams, and service-learning opportunities.</i>	The school distributes information in multiple languages on local services about available programs and resources. <i>For example, the school provides information about after-school tutorial programs provided at the local youth centre.</i>	The school is an active member of regular interagency meetings where information is shared and strategies to promote services are developed. <i>For example, a community resource expo is held every year to provide information for families about their services.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Creating a community hub within the school	School staff and the parent representative body create a family-friendly space within the school where staff and parent volunteers inform families about services and programs and plan activities. <i>For example, the space is available to the community to provide on-site services.</i>	Outreach courses for families and community members are conducted in school facilities at various times. <i>For example, the local TAFE uses the school's computer room to conduct evening computer related courses for families and community members.</i>	Government and non government agencies locate on school grounds. <i>For example, the local council uses the school community room to conduct play groups for parents and pre-school age children.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Building capacity in community organisations to engage with schools and support families	School staff reaches out to community organisations and businesses seeking support for school activities. <i>For example, workers in local businesses support the school's literacy program by volunteering an hour a week to listen to children read.</i>	The school invites community leaders to be involved in school based programs. <i>For example, the school establishes a mentoring program with local businesses to work with students and families to help students achieve their goals.</i>	School and parent leaders work with community and business representatives to develop programs to support student learning. <i>For example, the school community jointly develop submissions for funding for grants to enhance community engagement.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know

Overall rating



Not here yet



Developing



Building



Sustaining



Don't know

Dimension 7: Participating

Every member of the school community has something to offer and families' time, energy and expertise supports learning and school programs in many ways.

Outcome

Families and community members contribute to the life of the school in ways that reflect their interests, skills, experience and capacity to do so.

Throughout this tool, the stages of engagement build on each other, assuming that good practices at the *Developing* and *Building* stage will progress to the *Sustaining* stage.

Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning

Elements of effective practice	Stage of engagement			Your current stage
	Developing	Building	Sustaining	
Providing opportunities for families and community to participate in the life of the school	The school identifies opportunities for the participation of families and other community members at all levels of the school's operation. <i>For example, school staff is surveyed at the beginning of the year to identify opportunities to family and community participation.</i>	The parent representative body works with the school to organise formal participation programs. <i>For example, the parent organisation helps develop a volunteer program, sends invitation forms to all families in their home language, and coordinates the response.</i>	The school participation program reaches out to all families and offers opportunities for volunteering and paid employment. <i>For example, leaders of the parent representative body make personal phone calls to parents from diverse backgrounds to connect them to volunteering and employment opportunities.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Supporting families to engage in student learning activities	Teachers and families work together to develop resources to support teaching and learning programs. <i>For example, families and community members help to produce numeracy resource kits that can be used to support learning in the classroom or at home.</i>	The school and parent organisation implement strategies to overcome barriers to family and community engagement in teaching programs. <i>For example, interpreter services, transportation and childcare facilities are made available.</i>	The school organises a database of family and community skills, expertise, and backgrounds, through which teachers can find resources. <i>For example, a parent who is writer is invited to be a Writer-in-residence during Literacy/ Numeracy Week to work with students to improve writing skills.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Training parents and community members as classroom helpers	Individual teachers train parents to work with students in their classroom. <i>For example, a Year 2 teacher trains a small group of parents to work one-on-one with students during reading lessons.</i>	Families and community members are invited to participate in school-wide training programs to support teaching and learning programs. <i>For example, workshops, on specific aspects of literacy and numeracy, are offered throughout the year to build the capacity of families and community members to assist in classrooms.</i>	School partners with training providers to deliver accredited courses for families and community members. <i>For example, the school and local TAFE jointly train parents from diverse backgrounds as tutors to support students' literacy and numeracy learning.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know
Building the capacity of family and community members to lead the learning of others	Family and community members with an interest and experience in conducting workshops for other families are identified. <i>For example, school and parent representative body surveys parents and community members and develops a data base of workshop leaders.</i>	School staff and parent representative body develop parent leaders who help meet other parent's learning needs. <i>For example, parent leaders are trained in workshop facilitation skills and strategies for working in culturally diverse settings.</i>	School and parent leaders work with parents on a regular basis to develop ways to improve parents' capacity to support student learning. <i>For example, the annual school plan includes strategies to build the capacity of family and community members to support the learning of others through ongoing parent leadership development.</i>	Not here yet Developing Building Sustaining Don't know

Overall rating



Not here yet



Developing



Building



Sustaining



Don't know

Analysing current practice proforma

Dimension	What are our current practices?	What is working well?	What needs more work?
1. Communicating			
2. Connecting learning at school and at home			
3. Building community and identity			
4. Recognising the role of the family			
5. Consultative decision-making			
6. Collaborating beyond the school			
7. Participating			

Individual assessment sheet proforma

Step 1: Record your overall rating for each dimension from the *School Assessment Tool*

About you

Name.....

(Tick one)

Parent/family member School leader

Student Community member

Staff

	Communicating	Connecting learning at home and at school	Building community and identity	Recognising the role of the family	Consultative decision-making	Collaborating beyond the school	Participating
Sustaining							
Building							
Developing							
Not here yet							
Don't know							

Step 2: In relation to your responses, answer the following questions

1. Which dimension/s is the school already addressing well?	
2. Are there any dimensions where you think the school has not reached the <i>Developing</i> stage (<i>Not here yet</i>)? What are they?	
3. Are there any dimensions where you are unable to offer an opinion (<i>Don't know</i>)? What are they?	
4. Which dimension/s should be a priority for action?	

Optional – as required by workshop facilitator/leader

Step 3: Compare your responses with others near you/at your table/ in the larger group.

5. How do your responses compare with others?	
6. How are your responses the same as other similar people in the group (ie, other parents, other teachers, other students, etc)?	
7. How are your responses different from other similar people in the group?	

Group assessment proforma - for use by workshop facilitator/leader

Dimension
Copy this proforma for each dimension

Sustaining																											
Building																											
Developing																											
Not here yet																											
Don't know																											

- Step 1:** Ask individual participants (or table groups) to report where they think the school is currently at for this dimension.
- Step 2:** Shade in one column for each response. *(The facilitator may wish to use a different colour for*
 - parents/family*
 - staff*
 - students*
 - community members*
 - school leaders.*)
- Step 3:** As a group come to a consensus about the school's current stage.
- Step 4:** Record this stage on the *School Profile Overview* sheet.
- Step 5:** Discuss differences in ratings between the different groups. What conclusions can be made?

School profile overview proforma - for use by workshop facilitator/leader

Step 1: Record the group consensus results from the Group assessment proforma

	Communicating	Connecting learning at home and at school	Building community and identity	Recognising the role of the family	Consultative decision-making	Collaborating beyond the school	Participating
Sustaining							
Building							
Developing							
Not here yet							
Don't know							

Step 2: Discuss the responses to identify broad trends of the seven dimensions

<p>1. Which dimension/s is the school already addressing well?</p> <p><i>Are there any groups who disagreed?</i></p>	
<p>2. Are there any dimensions where the school has not reached the <i>Developing</i> stage (<i>Not here yet</i>)? What are they?</p> <p><i>Were there specific groups who believed this?</i></p>	
<p>3. Are there any dimensions where the group was unable to offer an opinion (<i>Don't know</i>)? What are they?</p> <p><i>Were there specific groups who believed this?</i></p>	
<p>4. What conclusions can be drawn from the results?</p>	
<p>5. Which dimension/s should be a priority for action?</p>	