



“Making that Extra Connection”: Bringing Parents Closer to their Children’s Learning

CANNON HILL ANGLICAN COLLEGE

At Cannon Hill Anglican College in Brisbane’s inner-east, parents have always been valued members of the school community.

But a pilot program running in the Junior School’s Japanese language classrooms is proving parents can also be powerful and effective allies when it comes to the educational outcomes of students.

Specialist Japanese teacher Jane Everett (pictured above) was keen to get parents more engaged with what was being taught in classrooms, and for the last two years has been trialling a number of communication techniques between home and school.

Parents invited in

Initially she considered evening Japanese lessons for parents on site but when COVID hit in early 2020, she instead recorded a series of short video lessons linked to what the children were learning and emailed them to parents at the end of each week.

A special parent-portal on the school website, with Japanese resources parents and students can download at any time, has been another popular communication channel with families.

Tapping into expert advice

The school’s work is being nurtured and steered by an Independent Schools Queensland 2020/2021 Research in Schools project, which receives funding support from the QIS Parents Network.

“Fifty years of research tells us that parent engagement in children’s learning makes a difference. When parents engage with their children’s learning, particularly out of school, attendance increases, behaviour in school improves, homework return rates go up and, overall, children’s achievement tends to improve. Children achieve more in school when their families engage in activities such as reading, asking thoughtful questions, and providing the structure children need to complete assignments.”

Barker, B., & Harris, D. (2020). *Parent and family engagement: An implementation guide for school communities*. Canberra: ARACY.

Ms Everett is now working on creating take-home resources linked to what is being taught in the classroom for parents and children to explore together. The books will all have a QR code which will allow families to hear Ms Everett reading the story in Japanese, prompting further rich conversations at home.

Home-school collaboration ‘enriching’ the education of students

It’s been an exciting and encouraging journey into the parent engagement research arena for Jane – a teacher with 24 years’ experience.

“I was always aware of the benefits of engaging parents but I’ve now seen first-hand how collaboration (between school and home) enriches the experience for the child,” she says.



Powering up parent engagement:
Cannon Hill Anglican College's Jane Everett

Case Study

Initiatives welcomed by families

Feedback from families had also been very positive.

"Our parents want their children to do well and they are sending them to our great school because they want them to be successful, but some parents were telling me they didn't know the Japanese language so they didn't know how to help their children (academically) at home.

"Those casual conversations got me thinking that that is something we can help parents with and we can do it in a fun and engaging way and that's exactly what we've been trying to do.

"Parents have told us it's given them a way to make that extra connection (with their child)."

Time-poor parents, who found it difficult to make parent information nights, especially valued the resources that could be downloaded in their own time, she said.

Engagement trumps involvement

Cannon Hill Anglican College's Deputy Director of Primary Anita Spencer, who has been overseeing and encouraging Jane's initiatives, said the project had highlighted the big difference between parent involvement and parent engagement.

"The lines often get blurred between involvement and engagement," Anita said.

"When parents are engaged in what their children are learning at school and they are contributing to that learning at home, that is true parent engagement."

Visit www.parentsnetwork.qld.edu.au for more information on the research that underpins the importance of "parent engagement" and its impact on student achievement and wellbeing.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS IN SCHOOLS

Parent engagement in a critical focus area for schools and is enshrined in the Australian Professional Standards for Principals and Teachers.

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) and the Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network (QIS Parents Network) have joined forces to elevate and enhance parent and community engagement in independent schools.

Queensland independent schools that would like more information on how to apply for parent engagement project funding should contact Natalie Horrobin, Education Services Advisor (Teaching & Learning):

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Schools that want to work with ISQ and the QIS Parents Network to prioritise parent engagement are invited to contact Shari Armistead, Director (Strategic Relations) and Board Chair QIS Parents Network: sarmistead@isq.qld.edu.au | 3228 1543