Children, families and communities

Quality kindergarten programs are created when teachers draw together their:

- professional knowledge
- understanding about children’s interests, ideas and intentions
- understanding about parent, family and community priorities and contexts.

Engaging family and community members in children’s learning helps services to build:

- trusting and respectful relationships
- children’s sense of belonging and wellbeing
- children’s confidence and enthusiasm for learning
- continuity between home and kindergarten
- continuity in learning as children move into Preparatory settings
- children’s ongoing success as learners.

What does the research say?

The benefits of engaging parents and families include improved learning outcomes for children from all economic, racial/ethnic and educational backgrounds and for students at all ages.

_Henderson, AT & Mapp, KL 2002, A New Wave of Evidence: The impact of school, family and community connections on student achievement (Research Synthesis), Austin TX: National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools,
_www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf._

What does this mean for my practice?

A focus on children

- Building children’s strong sense of identity and pride in who they are and where they come from
- Building a strong sense of belonging
- Creating learning experiences and environments that reflect children’s cultural identity and heritage
- Developing routines that take into account children’s prior experiences
- Valuing children’s first language and/or multi-lingual backgrounds.
A focus on families

- Understanding that parents and families connect and contribute to their children’s learning in many ways
- Creating welcoming environments that invite parents, carers and family members to participate
- Removing barriers to parent and family engagement
- Understanding the values, hopes and priorities of parents and families, e.g. to expand children’s first language and Standard Australian English
- Embracing the diverse concerns and priorities of parents and families
- Building understanding about family practices and routines in non-judgmental ways.

A focus on communities

- Building understandings of community perspectives, heritages, languages and practices
- Reflecting community priorities, projects and ways of being
- Inviting community members to share their cultural heritage
- Building specific knowledge about local Indigenous peoples
- Respecting and using culturally appropriate protocols and practices
- Supporting engagement in authentic local cultural experiences or celebrations.

Critical reflection

- What are your responsibilities for enacting the inclusive vision — all children experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life — and to improve outcomes for Indigenous children?
- What are the risks to children, families and the community if you do not adopt practices that promote inclusion and improved outcomes for Indigenous children?

More ideas

- For more ideas, refer to the intentional teaching ideas provided in the *Queensland kindergarten learning guideline*, Learning and development areas, Identity (pp. 39–42) and Connectedness (pp. 43–46).