



PARTNERS IN PRESCHOOL

'Parents play a critical role in providing learning opportunities at home and in linking what children learn at school with what happens elsewhere. By participating in learning interactions and activities outside the school, parents become important actors in a child's learning'. (ARACY, 2012, p. 17)

Parents and carers are children's first and most influential educators. Parental and family engagement supports children's academic success and wellbeing.

How can I be engaged?

There are many ways in which families and parents can be engaged in their child's preschool education.

Parental **involvement** opportunities at the preschool include: volunteering on site; attending excursions and events; serving as a representative on the preschool committee or School Board; or sharing a skill (e.g. gardening, cooking, and home language).

Parental **engagement** opportunities include: asking about and being engaged in your child's preschool day and learning; finding ways to explore children's interests and expanding knowledge; reading books together, and asking questions, and exploring mathematical concepts during everyday activities such as following a recipe.

It is important that families contribute in ways they feel most comfortable. Talking to your child's teacher about how you might contribute is a good place to start. It's okay to ask questions no matter how big or small they might be; open, ongoing and two way communication is an important tool in supporting your child's successful preschool experience.

“Improved learning outcomes are enhanced when parents and school staff work together to support an effective learning environment in both home and the school” (ARACY, 2012, p.19).

Questions to ask your preschool service:

- How can I be engaged in my child's education?
- How can I support my child at preschool?
- Can I spend time in the preschool?
- Are there things I can do at home with my child that can help with their learning?
- Are there some resources or books I can read to better understand?
- What parent/family activities do you offer?
- If I have a question, can I email, call on the phone, come and see the educator?
- What opportunities are there for me to contribute to decision making?
- What ways can I communicate with the preschool teacher?
- What events do you hold at the preschool?

*‘In genuine partnerships families and educators value each other’s knowledge and roles, communicate freely and respectfully and engage in shared decision making’
(DEEWR, EYLF, p. 12).*

Reference List

Emerson, L., Fear, J., Fox, S., and Sanders, E. (2012). Parental engagement in learning and schooling: Lessons from research. A report by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) for the Family–School and Community Partnerships Bureau: Canberra.

Australia Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) for the Council of Australian Government (2009). Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) for Australia.