WILLIAMSTOWN NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL No 1409

Community Engagement Policy
Date: *August 2015*

1. Rationale

Parents and the broader community play a vital role in supporting successful learning outcomes for our children. Research indicates that the educational outcomes, social competence, self-esteem and participation of children in post compulsory education, are significantly advantaged by the engagement of families, and the broader community, in a child's education.

Williamstown North Primary School recognises the need to continually improve educational outcomes for students through greater community connectedness and effective partnerships between students, parents, teachers and the community.

2. Aims

This Policy aims to advance the identification, promotion and implementation of good practice in parental and community engagement.

The school will actively formulate strategies in relation to the following Seven Key Dimensions of an Effective Family Engagement Partnership:

1. Communicating
2. Connecting learning at home and at school
3. Building community and identity
4. Recognising the role of the family
5. Consultative decision-making
6. Collaborating beyond the school
7. Participating or volunteering

Refer to Appendix A for further information on the Seven Key Dimensions.

3. Duty of Care

Williamstown North Primary School has a duty of care to establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school environment where parental and community input is welcomed, respected and valued.

4. Policy Context

This Community Engagement Policy uses best practice to provide a framework for supporting all partners – teachers, students, parents and the community – in enriching the learning environment and strengthening learning outcomes for all students.

The Community Engagement Policy will complement Williamstown North Primary School's Strategic Plan.

5. Definitions

Families is used to describe any of the wide variety of home arrangements that people establish to care for and rear children**.**

Parents includes all types of parental figures including carers.

School staff in this policy is defined by someone who carries out a duty on behalf of the school, paid or unpaid, or who is contracted to, or directly employed by the school or DET.

School community is generally considered to include students, families, school staff, other professionals, other support staff and volunteers. The School Community may also include members of other organisations – i.e., businesses, service delivery organisations and groups in the wider community who support the operation of the school.

Community engagement refers to the process by which individuals and community organisations engage in a relationship to seek a common outcome of maximising learning and development outcomes for children and young people.

6. Implementation
Community Engagement Plan

- The Community Engagement Sub-Committee will develop an annual community engagement plan with input from teachers and parents that is reflected by the key directions of the School Strategic Plan;
- The Implementation Plan will be structured to ensure that each of the Seven Key Dimensions are catered for.
- The Community Engagement Policy and Implementation Plan will be managed and monitored by the Community Engagement Sub-Committee and Education Sub-Committee of School Council;
- A Community Engagement budget will be devised annually as a part of the school's Program Budget process. Resources will be developed and/or purchased to support the school's Community Engagement strategy;
- The school will conduct self-assessment processes to determine the effectiveness of community engagement strategies

Refer to Appendix B for additional information to be considered when developing the annual Implementation Plan.

7. Evaluation and Review
This policy shall be reviewed as part of Williamstown North Primary School's cyclical policy review process conducted by School Council and updated if required. It will also be reviewed sooner if required by the Department of Education & Training or through a change in government policy.

8. References and Related Policies
State Government of Victoria – Department of Education & Training

'Families as partners in learning' – 2015
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/partnerships/pages/familypartnerships.aspx

'The Family-School & Community Partnerships Bureau' - 2015
http://www.family school.org.au

State Government of Victoria – Department of Education, Training & Workplace Relations

'Family-School Partnerships Framework – A guide for schools and families' - 2012
http://apo.org.au/research/family-school-partnerships-framework

Government of Australia – Commissioner for Privacy and Data Collection

'Privacy and Data Protection Act – 2014'
http://apo.org.au/research/privacy-and-data-protection-act-2014

Other

WNPS Strategic Plan

WNPS Homework Policy

WNPS Sponsorship and Advertising Policy

This policy has been ratified by School Council on 19th August 2015

APPENDIX A

The information below explains each of the Seven Key Dimensions of an Effective Family Engagement Partnership:

2.1 Communicating

- Parents and the broader community are engaged through multi-dimensional active, personal and frequent communication;
- Effective, ongoing communication results in positive and respectful relationships;
- Communication takes into account cultural and linguistic diversity.

2.2 Connecting learning at home and at school

- Parents and families are supported with the knowledge, skills and tools necessary to support student learning at home and at school;
- Families and the school work together to create positive attitudes to learning in each child;
- Families are informed about and understand their child's progress;
- High expectations about learning outcomes for all students is shared;
- The school becomes a venue and agent for parental self-growth, learning and the development of new skills.

2.3 Building community and identity

- To value the diversity of families and the many factors influencing parent involvement, and use these as a resource for building partnerships and a strong school community;
- Implement strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement by students, parents and our diverse communities.

2.4 Recognising the role of the family

- As primary educators of their children, families are valued by the school as partners in the child's learning and development;
- Ensure families understand school goals, curriculum and social objectives of schooling;
- Ensure the school understands family, parent and community priorities;
- Establish an environment where the school shows leadership which is visible and available.

2.5 Consultative decision making

- Foster and sustain a positive, welcoming and respectful school environment in which all parent perspectives are encouraged, valued and heard.

2.6 Collaborating beyond the school

- Effective partnerships are established through greater connectedness between students, parents, teachers and the community.

2.7 Participating or volunteering

- Actively explore and utilise families' time, energy and expertise to support learning and school programs;
- Parents and the broader community have a wide variety of opportunities to be involved in activities to support student's educational outcomes.

APPENDIX B

Each year when the Implementation Plan is developed, the Community Engagement Sub-Committee will consider the following points to ensure that the Seven Key Dimensions are catered for:

B.1 Communication

- Undertake a review of all school/parent communication systems for relevance, ease of language and scope to provide feedback;
- Use a range of communication tools and channels to communicate community engagement information, activities and initiatives;
- Community engagement key messages to be included in all relevant external communications;
- Be aware of, and communicate, ways to access information in other languages and forms;
- Investigate programs to welcome new families, including induction kits developed by parents that are in user-friendly language and font size;
- Consider education and training programs for teachers and school leaders that assist them in communicating with parents effectively, and extend their reporting skills and ability to ensure cultural inclusiveness in their teaching practice;
- Develop a school calendar outlining the key points in the school year where engagement of parents and the community is vital;
- Support class-parent representatives who can become a welcoming, informal network of support to parents;
- Involve students, especially older students, in P/T/S conferences and other communications from the school where appropriate.

B.2 Connecting learning at home and at school

- Develop local strategies to support transitions between early childhood education and care, primary school and secondary school;
- Provide information sessions for families on the skills required for students at each Year level;
- Provide regular school and classroom focussed newsletters to parents to provide an overview of curriculum and key activities;
- Embed the practice of involving parents in goal setting discussions with their children at P/T/S conferences;
- Ensure the school's homework policy continues to guide parental support and provide practical literacy and numeracy activities/tips for families on how they can monitor and discuss schoolwork at home;
- Develop home-learning experiences to enable families to develop the skills and knowledge to best support their children with learning at home;
- Provide professional learning opportunities around developmental and contemporary teaching practices for parents - targeting areas of need or interest such as student resilience, literacy and numeracy;
- Actively encourage parent involvement in the classroom at all year levels;
- Provide training and development opportunities for teachers to foster family-school partnerships;
- Embed 'open door' policy between parents and teachers.

B.3 Building community and identity

- Work towards representation of diverse parent groups on all school committees including school council;
- Monitor school climate (through surveys and focus groups);
- Establish a space/hub for parents within the school grounds to be used as a meeting place and to participate in programs;
- Develop participative and inclusive approaches to design the schools agreed values;
- Invite people in the broader community to become involved in the school;

- Create connections with local health and welfare services to facilitate access to such support for school community members.

B.4 Recognising the role of the family

- Determine parents, families and community members needs and priorities;
- Conduct formal and informal forums, which discuss the parents' role as the first educators of their children.

B.5 Consultative decision-making

- Consult flexibly to reach a cross-section of students, parents and community members;
- Ensure the school community is consulted on new school policies, eg assessment, reporting, reviews and curriculum changes;
- Ensure information regarding consultation opportunities is widely circulated in a variety of forms;
- Include students, along with parents, in decision making groups;
- Ensure that decision making structures provide genuine opportunities for families to participate;
- Encourage parent participation in school committees and Council and provide appropriate induction and ongoing training and support.

B.6 Collaborating beyond the school

- Foster community partnerships to reflect the diversity of our parents and the broader community;
- Consider family-school partnerships in the development and implementation of the school's Strategic Plan;
- Engage in appropriate sponsorship arrangements guided by the school's sponsorship and advertising policy;
- Establish partnerships with other service agencies;
- Develop partnerships with local community organisations and promote understanding of, and participation in, important community events;
- Gather and provide information and access for students and families on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, health, cultural, social support and other programs or services;
- Invite past students to participate in school programs for students;
- Open school facilities for community use, including hire of facilities, community meetings, community interest groups, elections etc.

B.7 Participating or volunteering

- Assess the volunteer needs and participation opportunities of the school each year to determine the many ways parents, families and the broader community can participate and interact with school and the school community;
- The Community Engagement Sub-Committee of School Council will aim to optimise parent involvement and participation;
- Develop practices for recruitment, training, support and recognition of parent and community volunteers;
- Develop practices and strategies to utilise parent and community skills, talents and services to draw on when required;
- Invite parents and community members to become involved as guest speakers where relevant;
- Promote volunteer and participation opportunities through a wide variety of channels as required.