PARENT LEADERSHIP

LEADING IN A CATHOLIC SCHOOL COMMUNITY
We all play a vital role in supporting successful learning outcomes for our children.
Roles for Parents in Catholic Schools

There are many ways in which parents can be engaged to improve the educational experience and outcomes for their children.

Parents’ activities tend to fall into four main roles.

1. **Parents as teachers** – Parents establish a home environment that promotes learning, reinforces what is being taught at school, and develops the values and life skills children need to become responsible adults.

2. **Parents as supporters of education** – Parents contribute their knowledge and skills to the school, demonstrate the importance of education and hard work, and take part in the parents and friends association, sporting and other activities that promote education.

3. **Parents as advocates for their own and for all children** – Parents guide their children’s careers in school, plan for their future, resolve problems and disputes, work with schools in planning for better programs and higher achievement.

4. **Parents as decision makers** – Parents serve on parents and friends committees and school boards. They conduct action research, take part in decisions about programs and staffing, and contribute to joint problem-solving at every level.

Research has found that children do best when their parents are able to be involved in their children’s learning in all four ways.

**Did you know..?**

- When parents are involved at school, not just at home, children do better in schools and they stay in school longer.
- When parents are involved in the school in different roles, the performance of all children in the school tends to improve.
- Children do best at school when their parents are enabled to play key roles in their child’s learning – as teacher, supporter, advocate and decision maker.
- Comprehensive, well-planned partnerships between family and school lead to higher student achievement.

*(Henderson and Berla, 2002)*
Parents as partners

Family-school partnerships are collaborative relationships and activities involving school staff, parents and other family members of students at that school. Effective partnerships are based on mutual trust and respect, and shared responsibility for the education of the children and young people at the school.

Why are family-school partnerships important?

Families are the first educators of their children, and they continue to influence their children’s learning and development during the school years and long afterwards. Schools have an important responsibility in helping to nurture and teach future generations. Because families want the best for their children, they trust schools to provide educational foundations for their future. At the same time, schools need to recognise the primary role of the family in education.

These ideas show how important it is for families and schools to work together in partnership. Research also demonstrates that effective schools have high levels of parental and community involvement, and this involvement is strongly related to improved student learning, attendance and behaviour. Family involvement can have a major impact on student learning, regardless of the social or cultural background of the family.

Family involvement in schools is therefore central to high quality education; it is part of the core business of schools.


Many People, Many Qualities

St Paul reminds us that “there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.”

1 Corinthians 12
In holding positions of responsibility within Catholic school communities, parent leaders:

- Act as role models within the school community by reflecting the values and ethos of the school;
- Work constructively with the principal, the staff and the wider school community;
- Build and nurture a sense of community.

**Characteristics of a Team**

**In effective teams, members:**

- have a common purpose
- share a common language
- appreciate the value of a supportive culture
- listen and give consideration to each other’s ideas
- understand what has to be done, and are committed to achieving it
- focus on achieving the task and developing the team
- agree how to proceed, and allow time for discussion about specific actions
- share the work to be done and feel included in the team
- accept variety – seek out and make use of the differences among their skills
- strive to improve their own and the team’s work
- develop joint strategies to resolve problems and solve blockages
- share leadership and provide support to each other in this role

**PRESIDENT/CHAIRPERSON**

**Qualities of a President/Chairperson:**

- Deep interest in the school community
- Committed to the learning and wellbeing of all children in the school
- “Big Picture” thinker
- Able to collaborate with other school leaders
- Open to a variety of views
- Good communicator and networker
- Able to ensure cooperation between groups
- Able to motivate and encourage others
Duties and responsibilities:
• Be visible within the school and accessible to parents and the school leadership team.
• Promote and model constructive parent engagement in the school.
• Prepare and distribute the agenda prior to committee meetings.
• Ensure the meeting is properly convened in accordance with any guidelines/Charter.
• Ensure meetings begin and end punctually and adhere to the agenda. Point out major changes to the circulated agenda.
• Sign the minutes of the previous meeting once they have been accepted as a true and accurate record of that meeting.
• Attend to incoming and outgoing correspondence (ideally prior to the meeting).
• Follow up on actions from the previous meeting.
• Try to ensure speakers keep to the point but don’t suppress people’s imagination.
• Summarise actions decided from the meeting, clarify person responsible for them and ensure this is noted in the minutes.
• Make sure speakers are not interrupted and private conversations among members do not take place.
• Make sure, particularly on contentious matters, as many opinions as possible are expressed and call for a vote if consensus cannot be reached.
• Make clear the procedure of voting.

Qualities of a Secretary:
• Deep interest in the school community
• Committed to the learning and wellbeing of all children in the school
• Well organised
• Efficient
• Organises meetings and all record keeping
• Good at listening
• Able to work closely with President/Chairperson

Duties and Responsibilities:
• Develop a working relationship with the Chairperson of the Committee and your key school contact person.
• Negotiate with Chairperson who will be responsible for receiving, sorting and reporting on correspondence.
Record minutes of Committee meetings including actions and responsibilities.
Distribute minutes to committee members in a timely manner.
Maintain an updated file/folder of minutes of Committee meetings and all records and correspondence.

TREASURER

Qualities of a Treasurer:
• Deep interest in the school community
• Committed to the learning and wellbeing of all children in the school
• Sound financial skills – receipting, banking etc.
• Excellent attention to detail
• Able to report to P&F monthly and annually at the AGM

Duties and Responsibilities:
• Liaise with Principal/Business Manager/Bursar regarding the financial processes and procedures required for the management of P&F funds including:
  • Record keeping
  • Issuing of receipts
  • Payment of accounts
  • Management of monies received
  • Financial reporting to the Board and the broader school community at the Annual General Meeting.

Note: In most instances, the position of Treasurer is a nominal one with key financial processes and procedures being carried out by school personnel.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Qualities of Committee Members:
• Deep interest in the school community
• Committed to the learning and wellbeing of all children in the school
• Enthusiastic and generous
• Energetic
• Co-operative, able to work with a group
• Able to listen
• “Doers”, able to get the jobs done
• Good networkers, able to enthuse and connect others
Duties and Responsibilities:

- Be open to share your time, talents and expertise for the benefit of the committee and the broader school community.
- Attend meetings as regularly as possible and be punctual.
- Be prepared for the meeting by reading minutes of previous meeting and the agenda.
- Send apologies if you are unable to come to the next meeting.
- Be prepared to listen attentively when others are speaking.
- Be co-operative at all times, sharing interest in the issues at hand and doing your best to ensure that the meeting runs efficiently.
- Present own view in logical, clearly understood terms and keep to the point.
- Do not try to monopolise the meeting by talking too long.
- Address the Chairperson when speaking. This will prevent a confusing crossfire of discussion among individual members.

Responsibility for what has been agreed should be shared by all group members.