

## Parental Involvement in Education

Recently the New Zealand School Trustees Association published a summary of international research highlighting the importance and impact of parental support in the education of their children. Key points included the conclusion that “Family participation in education was twice as predictive of students’ academic success as socioeconomic status” and that the greater the level of parental involvement, the more beneficial the achievement effects. When parents are involved, students are likely to have higher academic grades, better school attendance records, increased motivation and higher self-esteem and decreased risks of being involved in violent and anti-social behaviour.

The following were identified as tangible and specific actions parents can take to involve themselves in their children’s education:

- Establish a daily family routine – establish set times and provide the right environment for homework and study, assign responsibility for household chores, eat meals together and be firm about bedtimes.
- Monitor out-of-school activities – encourage involvement in sports and cultural activities and show support by attending to watch, check up on children when they are not directly under parental supervision.
- Model the value of learning, self-discipline and hard-work – demonstrate and reinforce that achievement comes from working hard and persevering in the face of difficulties and challenges.
- Express high but realistic expectations for achievement – recognise and encourage children’s strengths and talents and assist them to set appropriate goals and standards of behaviour.
- Encourage children’s development/progress in school – attending parent/teacher interviews, regularly discussing children’s progress and learning with them, contacting teachers when there are concerns, regularly checking homework diaries and offering assistance with homework, discussing the value of a good education and career options.
- Encourage reading, writing and discussion among family members – encourage and model reading at home, discuss what is being read and why particular authors are liked or disliked.

Parents tend to be more involved in their son’s education in the junior school and increasingly take a ‘back seat’ as young men move into the senior school. This is entirely understandable and supports young men to develop their ability to work independently, and recognises their increasing autonomy. However, there are some simple and effective things that parents can do to support the development of the necessary independent study skills required for long term success:

- Ensuring your son attends school regularly. Being present in class is one of the most essential factors for educational achievement. This is particularly important in the senior school where generally all lessons involve either preparing for an assessment, or sitting an assessment.
- Regularly checking the NCEA assessment schedule on Stratus and the fortnightly assessment reminder emails, and then working with your son to identify his upcoming assessment workload and help him to effectively schedule his time so that he can complete all tasks to the best of his ability and on time.
- Sitting down with your son to check the NZQA and TKI websites for each assessment so that he is aware of the specific requirements and can use the available exemplars to guide his work.
- Regularly making time to talk about your son’s academic progress - the subjects and topics he is enjoying and those he is finding difficult, and his thoughts about future study and career pathways.

Discussions with parents are not always something that young men engage in willingly or enthusiastically. Asking general open ended questions – those that encourage ‘longer’ responses – and providing plenty of time for your son to formulate his thoughts before answering, are important steps in encouraging discussion. Making the discussion seem like an ‘inquiry’ will see him quickly put up barriers and ‘retreat’ rather than ‘engage’. Celia Lashlie provided plenty of sage advice on the topic of effectively engaging with young men in her book “He’ll be OK: Growing Gorgeous Boys into Good Men.”