

Tool 8: Sample activities for strengthening and sustaining family–school partnerships

Following is a list of some activities school communities might implement to strengthen and sustain partnerships across the whole school to prevent and reduce drug-related harm. They provide sample activities only. Each school community will need to determine its own priorities and the most appropriate strategies to meet their particular context.

Sample family–school partnerships activities across the whole school environment

1. Promote a culture of welcoming across the school staff and students.
2. Develop a register of families' strengths, interests and expertise that they might like to contribute to the school.
3. Maintain a staff directory identifying the roles and responsibilities of staff, particularly in relation to drug or student welfare issues and include this information in any school open day or orientation activities.
4. Develop a parent engagement policy within the school that outlines roles, responsibilities and methods for partnership in decision-making.
5. Establish a parent network so that parents call others on the school's behalf to invite them to events/activities.
6. Allocate a parent space within the school.
7. Open up the school as a community resource so families feel comfortable entering the school and develop a sense of being part of a school community, eg run computer or sewing classes within the school or enable the school to be used for Saturday school and recreation or homework classes for children and parents.
8. Provide joint professional development for staff and parents on relevant issues, eg training for classroom support and ways to maximise parent involvement.
9. Provide learning events within the school that promote student participation so parents and family members will come along and see their child's contribution.
10. Provide transport, child minding, etc at school-based events and activities.
11. Provide joint information sessions for parents and students on issues such as homework policy, study skills, career decision-making, etc.
12. Organise parenting skills workshops/discussions/meetings around priority areas that will contribute to parents' understanding of and skills to support their children's ongoing development and wellbeing.
13. Celebrate cultural days and involve all families and local communities.
14. Provide interpreters at family meetings and information evenings.

Tool 8: Sample activities for strengthening and sustaining family–school partnerships, cont.

15. Devote staff meeting time to exploring ways of improving communication with families that will enhance the learning and wellbeing of all students.
16. Throughout the year and through a variety of methods, publicise opportunities for parent and community involvement.
17. Provide genuine opportunities and invitations for all parents and families across the community to be involved in advisory committees, school councils, Family–School Action Teams, parent bodies and organisations.
18. Review the school’s drug education policy and ensure it meets the diverse needs of all families and students across the community.
19. Regularly include information for parents in the school newsletter/website about strategies to promote student resilience, health and wellbeing.
20. Develop booklets/information leaflets for parents on issues such as stages of child development, nurturing resilience, homework policy, smoking policy, programmes the school offers, how to support their child’s learning, etc.

Tool 8: Sample activities for strengthening and sustaining family–school partnerships, cont.

Sample family–school partnerships activities across the school curriculum

1. Establish a homework policy that clarifies purpose and possible roles for parent involvement.
2. Undertake an inventory of families' strengths, interests and expertise that they might like to contribute to student learning activities.
3. Provide professional development to teaching staff who may need cross-cultural skills for working with students and their families.
4. Provide family information sheets on a term/semester basis that set out the learning their child will be involved in, highlighting any aspects of the learning that may involve families.
5. Integrate activities within the school curriculum that acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of students' backgrounds and cultural assets.
6. Provide an integrated curriculum across key learning areas that promotes a resilience-based approach to health and wellbeing, including skills such as communicating with others, problem solving and decision-making.
7. Ask community leaders and agency personnel to review the drug education curriculum for its cultural appropriateness.
8. Organise a parent event where students, families and community members work collaboratively to plan and present activities with a drug prevention focus.
9. Provide programmes where students engage with the community and its resources.
10. Invite parents on excursions.
11. Provide school excursions where students and families can participate in learning activities together.
12. Invite parents, family and community members to participate in planned learning activities as part of the school's curriculum.
13. Provide information and guidelines to parents on how they might model and communicate positive attitudes about learning and wellbeing that are appropriate to their child's stage of development.
14. Set homework that engages family members in discussion. (However, also ensure that these assignments are not always the emphasis of home tasks as some students may not have the opportunity to engage with their family members in this manner on an on-going basis.)
15. Arrange regular informal 'meetings' with parents to share their thoughts and possible concerns.

Tool 8: Sample activities for strengthening and sustaining family–school partnerships, cont.

Sample family–school partnerships activities where students may need additional help

1. Review with key stakeholders across the school community the school welfare policy to ensure it meets the needs of all students and families.
2. Provide parents and students with clear and culturally appropriate information on the school welfare policy and who to contact if they have any concerns.
3. Communicate to families the range of programmes and supports within the school that can assist if students are in need of additional help.
4. Provide parents with information booklets/leaflets on signs that might indicate a student is vulnerable to poor learning and health outcomes at different stages of their development.
5. Maintain a strong network among all staff and set time aside to consider those students who may be in need of additional help and support.
6. Maintain up-to-date and confidential records of those students who require assessment and referral.
7. Implement targeted programmes for children who need their learning and resilience to be strengthened.
8. Implement a ‘recovery’ programme or other early intervention programme.
9. Involve the school in programmes with a drug prevention focus such as Wakakiriri, the Rock Eisteddfod, Police Youth programmes and community service programmes.
10. Offer a range of extra curricula programmes that will engage students with different interests, eg Duke of Edinburgh, Outward Bound, debating, mock trial, theatre sports. Match these activities and skills against the interests of your school community and look for expertise among the family groups, as this may be a means to create some valuable school–family partnerships.
11. Connect students with interest groups beyond school to expand their social connections and provide more opportunities for success, eg sporting, Scouts, and art and craft classes.
12. Investigate programmes and agencies within the community and collect information on community health, social support and other programmes or services that may be of interest to students and families.

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Sample family–school partnerships activities where students need assessment and referral

1. Review the school’s drug policy and incident management plan to ensure it meets the needs of all students, including those at risk.
2. Communicate clear rules and responsibilities to staff, students and parents around drug use in the school.
3. Maintain an up-to-date register of community agencies and services that can meet the diverse and specific needs of students at risk, and their families.
4. Communicate referral information to parents and students in an accessible and non-threatening way.
5. Establish clear guidelines within the school for seeking to retain students at risk in schooling, while ensuring others are not put at risk.
6. Provide opportunities for counselling services and community agencies to be involved in school-based activities as appropriate.
7. Establish support groups for students at risk that involve students, parents, welfare staff and community agency personnel.
8. Establish methods for monitoring and reviewing the outcomes of high risk students who are being supported.