

Tool 1: Family–school partnerships for nurturing resilience and wellbeing

There are seven key dimensions where schools and families might work in productive partnership as part of a health promoting strategy aimed at a range of benefits for students, including drug prevention.⁸

1 Understanding of roles

Families and the school reach a mutual understanding of each other's roles and priorities.

As the primary educators of their children, parents/caregivers have a lasting influence on their children's attitudes and outcomes for their learning, health and wellbeing. Families and schools need to understand each other's roles and priorities, including when and how parents may support the learning and wellbeing of their child. Here the focus is on schools and families reaching out to understand and embrace the needs of all families within the school community as part of supporting the social and learning environment of its students.

2 Connecting home and school learning

Learning between school and home is linked and reinforced.

This involves families and schools working together to reinforce learning and wellbeing by valuing and using the skills and knowledge children bring from home to school and from school to home. It includes parents working with their child on home-based activities and the school providing learning that is meaningful to home contexts and needs.

3 Communicating

Communication between family and school is two-way and mutual.

This involves effective communication from school to home and home to school that provides the opportunity for mutual understanding and accommodates the diversity of all families. Effective and reciprocal communication between families and the school is fundamental to developing trust between these two key influences in a young person's life and to promote consistent, positive messages around health and wellbeing.

4 Participating

Families contribute their time and strengths to activities in and beyond the school.

Families contributing their time, energy and expertise can support the health and wellbeing of students, staff and parents. This involves families participating in school-based activities that support students and the school in nurturing learning, resilience and wellbeing. It includes parents and families volunteering for a range of activities that might occur within or beyond the school, such as sports days, community events, etc.

⁸ These dimensions and their descriptions have been adapted from the 'Draft Family-Schools Partnerships Framework', 2004 to reflect the focus here on drug education and prevention.

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5 Decision-making

Collaboration between families, schools and community on school policy and practices.

This includes families participating in the decisions within the school that can impact on the health and wellbeing of students and the broader school community. This might be at the whole school level in terms of school policy and guidelines on issues impacting on health and wellbeing, through to deciding how families and schools might work together on drug referral options in the community.

6 Collaborating beyond the school

Community resources are integrated for nurturing resilience and wellbeing of the school community.

This involves schools and families working together to identify, locate and integrate community resources to strengthen and support schools, students and families, and in return improve the quality of life in the school community.

7 Building community and identity

The cultures, traditions, values and relationships of the community are honoured.

This involves schools and families working together to improve the quality of life of the community while honouring the culture, traditions, values and relationships in that community. It includes activities that shape students' identity and culture and which build a sense of community in each student. Families and the school working in productive partnership promote a sense of connectedness to community. Here the resilience of the whole community is nurtured through fostering cultural renewal and a sense of belonging among students, families and the broader school community.