

Families and communities engagement in education ^[1]

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Author: Bull, Ally

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Summary: In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on engaging families and communities in education. The New Zealand Curriculum includes "community engagement" as one of eight principles that "should underpin all school decision making". In New Zealand, as well as overseas, schools are being encouraged to work "in partnership" with families. The underlying assumption, both in New Zealand and overseas, seems to be that parental involvement in education is a good thing, and the more it happens, the better it will be for student outcomes. However, our work at the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER), and our reading of the international research literature, has made it clear to us that the purpose of engaging families and communities in education is often not obvious. There seem to be two quite different rationales put forward in discussions of parent involvement/engagement/participation/partnerships. 1. In the first of these rationales, home-school partnerships are seen as an important way to bring schools and their communities closer together, and to facilitate democratic participation by communities in debates about the future focus and purpose of schooling. 2. In the second view, partnerships are seen as useful strategies for lifting student achievement. In 2008-2009 we carried out a small exploratory research project that aimed to find out what some parents and teachers thought about community engagement. We were interested in how they saw their roles; in what they thought students should learn in schools; and their views on who should decide how learning-- and schooling in general -- should be organised. This working paper describes what we found.

Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[3]

Tags: parent involvement ^[4]
curricula and pedagogy ^[5]

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