

FROM THE DET CE

The mid-year break is almost upon us and planning for semester two is well underway.

In preparation for the remainder of the year, the Department of Education and Training is planning a series of workshops focused on providing information to School Councils on a range of topics.

School Councils play an important and critical role between parents and schools, and the Department is keen to ensure those close working relationships continue.

With the Australian Government providing funding around the Empowering Local Schools initiative, it is even more timely to hold discussions about the role of School Councils into the future.

The Department is also committed to working with COGSO to provide clear advice around the responsibilities of School Councils in relation to the recent changes in Occupational Health and Safety legislation.

All Principals and School Council Chairs will be invited to attend the workshops. More information around the dates and specifics will be provided in coming weeks.

The Treasurer handed down the Northern Territory Government's 2012 Budget at the beginning of May and as a result, we are currently finalising the Department's Budget.

In light of the \$850 million allocated to the Department for the 2012-13 year, the new Budget provides the opportunity to continue to invest in the priorities of our Strategic Plan. I look forward to working with School Councils in the new financial year on strategies to help improve educational outcomes for all Territory children.

Gary Barnes

UPCOMING EVENTS

COGSO at the Show

COGSO representatives will be at the Alice Springs, Katherine, and Darwin Shows this year.

Come down, learn more about COGSO, meet the COGSO representatives from the area and have a chat about your school and getting involved in your child's education.

ACSSO National Conference

The Australian Council for State School Organisations will be holding their National conference in Darwin this year in October/November.

Look out for more details to come via your School Council and next term's pareNT newsletter.

KEY DIARY DATES

Semester 1 Holidays
25 June - 20 July

Borroloola Show Day
29 June

Alice Springs Show Day
6 July

Tennant Creek Show Day
13 July

Katherine Show Day
20 July

Darwin Show Day
27 July

Picnic Day
6 August

Term 3 Dates
24 July - 28 September

COGSO
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Term 2, 2012

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we come to the end of term 2 and what I'm sure is a welcome break for our kids, I would like to reflect on the year so far.

Two of our team travelled to Canberra where they attended a symposium conducted by the Family-School & Community Partnerships Bureau on "Engaging Parents and Families in Learning and School". We have included some information around effective engagement strategies in this newsletter.

COGSO had a stand at the Fred's Pass Show. This provided families with the opportunity to meet some of the COGSO team, gather information to support families within the school or School Council environment and to discuss any concerns or issues they may have. Look out for us at the Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin shows, come and say g'day.

COGSO and DET have been working together to resolve a range of issues and to bed-down further training opportunities for our remote communities, watch for the updates around this.

Elise and Tamika (from the office) have been fortunate enough to have been invited to several of our urban School Councils to assist with provision governance guidance and support Council processes – the girls are more than happy to visit your School Council too!

Remember: We want to hear your concerns and also the achievements in your school communities. We are here to support and advocate for you!

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope you all get to enjoy some time with your children and the wonderful dry season weather and associated activities over the forthcoming break.

Mark Brustolin

COGSO ACTION

Insurance – seeking clarification and information regarding DET's new self-insurance model (indemnity, risk, assets, work experience).

C2C (Curriculum 2 Classroom) – engaging in initial discussion with DET raising your concerns.

AOP and Strategic Plans – ensuring DET communicate to Principals the rights of School Councils to engage in effective consultation and valid input into the planning process. Ensuring that school leaders understand the requirement for School Councils to approve AOP and Strategic plans.

Infrastructure – raising concerns from schools and seeking briefing in relation to programmed works and maintenance of ageing school infrastructure.

IT Staffing – requesting review of IT staffing in schools.

Buses – raising your concerns around bus issues in Katherine.

Funding – seeking further clarity and transparency in schools funding formulae.

Professional Development – conveying concerns that schools relief teacher funding does not support allowing staff to access sufficient professional development, especially with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum.

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

NT COGSO firmly believes the parents and families play a significant role in their children's education. Research shows that 5% - 15% of student learning happens in the classroom, the rest happens at home or in the community. Parental engagement is the key to students' success at school.

Family-School Partnership Framework uses seven key dimensions to explain how school communities can strengthen engagement with families and community to improve student learning outcomes:

1. Communicating
2. Connecting learning at home and at school
3. Building community and identity
4. Recognising the role of the family
5. Consultative decision making
6. Collaborating beyond the school
7. Participating

Underpinning principles:

- All families and schools want the best for their children
- All children have the right to the opportunity to reach their full potential
- Families are the first and continuing educators of their children
- Effective schools provide a nurturing and supportive learning environment
- Families and schools value quality teaching and respect teachers professional expertise
- Families and school value the diversity of families and use this as a resource for building partnerships and communities
- Family-school partnerships are based on mutual responsibility, respect and trust
- Leadership is critical to building, maintaining and renewing partnerships
- Family-school partnerships improve student motivation and learning
- Family-school partnerships strengthen the connections between schools and their communities
- Partnerships can involve all organisations that support families and schools

Ways you can get engaged in your school and your child's education:

- Join your School Council
- Read the newsletter
- Volunteer at the school, such as in the school garden, or helping with 'readers'

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

- Complete surveys or feedback forms sent by the school
- Have regular contact with your child's teachers and/or Year Level Coordinator
- Attend information or community events held by the school
- Attend or request parent-teacher interviews

Links to useful resources on parental engagement:

- <http://www.smarterschools.gov.au/ParentalEngagement/Documents/Strengtheningstudentlearningresource.pdf>
- <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/letsread>

Parent Yarns

The Smith Family is hosting Parent Yarns at schools to increase parents' confidence to engage with staff and collaborate to increase student success and resolve student issues.

'Proves it takes a community to raise a child' observed one parent after attending The Smith Family's parent yarn at Rosebery Middle School recently. Held in four NT schools - Gray Primary School, Sanderson Middle School, Rosebery Middle School and Centralian Middle school - each term during 2012, these parent meetings aim to build a collaborative culture and involve parents in school activities. Gray Primary School parents commented: 'It really showed how much everyone's dreams are really the same for their children' and 'provided more information about early childhood learning'.



Building a tower of support at Rosebery MS

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Starting with a shared meal for the whole family, followed by 'Fairy Jill' and a child minder to care for the children; parents, the school Principal and a few teachers explored their hopes, dreams and ideas for the success of their children and talked about what needs to happen to realise these goals. The yarns, facilitated by Julianne and Marilyn Willis from The Learning Enterprise, North, create a positive, shared learning atmosphere to cultivate mutual understanding and cooperation between parents and school staff. Over 30 per cent of families participating in the parent meetings identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and most parents found the night interesting and will come again. The facilitators also meet separately with school leaders and staff teams to gain insight into their perspective on parent engagement.

This initiative, funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, aims to increase parents' knowledge about their children's learning, build their skills in supporting this learning, and make clear what they need to do to ensure progress. The Smith Family is keen to improve parent relationships with school staff, and is hosting these parent yarns to increase parents' confidence to engage with staff and collaborate to resolve student issues. The parent yarns also aim to improve student engagement as a result of parents engagement in the school culture. One sign that this is happening will be when parents bring their culture into the school environment, which will require openness and trust with school staff.

The Smith Family is also hosting workshops and courses that specifically aim to improve parenting skills and relationships with adolescent children.

Dates for term 3 Parent Yarns

Sanderson Middle School - Wednesday 8 August
Centralian Middle School - Tuesday 14 August
Rosebery Middle School - Thursday 16 August
Gray Primary School - Thursday 13 September

For further information, contact Tess McPeake at The Smith Family, phone 8985 6841 or email: tess.mcpeake@thesmithfamily.com.au

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Gray Primary School's Parent Yarn

Sharon Chin, Assistant Principal at Gray Primary School told us about the Parent Yarn held at her school and what the parents who attended thought of the evening.

Gray School in partnership with The Smith Family have run a very successful Parent Yarn in term 1 and are planning more for terms 2, 3 and 4.

Our first Parent Yarn was incredibly multicultural with parents represented from all over the world, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, The Philippines as well as our Australian and Indigenous parents.

The main aim of the Parent Yarns is to engage our parents in the school community and to work in partnership to build a sense of community and shared responsibility for the children. The message is that we are all connected by what we want for our children.

The parents were in small groups, which included teachers, and the discussions were around the parents hopes and dreams for their children and what skills and knowledge they felt their children needed.



Connecting web of parents and teachers at Gray PS

Some of the feedback from the parents was around their feelings of support, renewing beliefs that the school and parents can come together and work together for the children and realizing that everyone has the same dream for their children. The parents valued and enjoyed the opportunity to get together with other parents and teachers in an environment which was fun and informative and are looking forward to the next Parent Yarn.