

What does the evidence say about engaging parents in children's learning?

Barbara Barker, Susannah Schoeffel &
Dr Tanya Vaughan

Webinar, 15 October 2019



**EVIDENCE
FOR LEARNING**

Acknowledgement to Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the elders of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation and pay respect to their elders past, present and emerging.



Working with parents to support children's learning



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Introduce yourself

What is your role?

Where are you joining us from?

Let us know in the chat box.

You can adjust your settings in the chat box to let everyone know, or just send us a note.

Quiz

How many months of impact on average could be expected from parental engagement?

- a. +1 month
- b. +3 months
- c. +5 months

Which of the following describes examples of practice from the highest impact to lowest impact (based on effect size)

- a. Shared reading, checking homework, text messages to parents
- b. Checking homework, shared reading, text messages to parents
- c. Text messages to parents, shared reading, checking homework

Overview

- Working with parents to support children's learning
- Exploring the Teaching & Learning Toolkit
- Four evidence-based recommendations
- In conversation with Barbara Barker, ARACY
- Questions



Evidence-informed parental engagement

- Engaging parents in the learning of their children can improve students' learning by an average of three months.
- It is important to consider the age of the student when identifying strategies to work with parents.

Evidence-informed parental engagement

LONG READS

Authors: [Tanya Vaughan](#), [Susannah Schoeffel](#)

14 October 2019

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Parental engagement can be an effective way to improve students' learning and attendance. ©Olga Gorevan/Shutterstock

How can schools best work with parents, carers, grandparents and older siblings to support students and improve their learning? Dr Tanya Vaughan and Susannah Schoeffel explore two evidence-based recommendations from a new guidance report for Australian practitioners, and share practical examples of action.

Evidence-informed parental engagement

- Personalised school communications can improve children's learning and attendance.
- Messages and letters are more effective “if they are personalised, linked to learning and promote positive interactions by, for example, celebrating success” (van Poortvliet, Axford, & Lloyd, 2018, p. 7).





The Toolkits – The Teaching & Learning Toolkit and the Early Childhood Education Toolkit

- Supports evidence-informed decision making
- Provides guidance on how to use their resources to improve outcomes for students
- Is an introduction to education research

+5

Average months' worth of learning progress;



Security of evidence



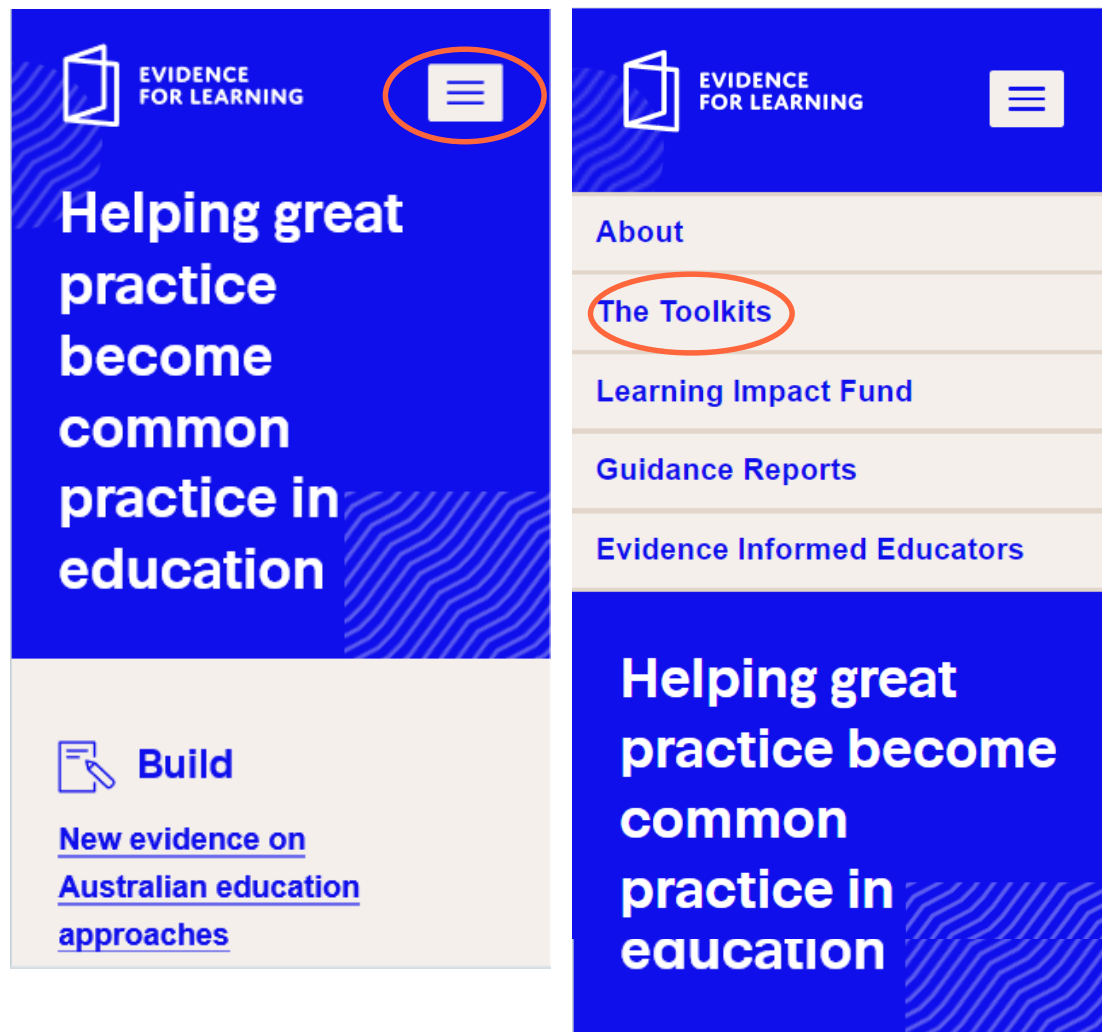
Cost to implement

Arts participation	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+2
Aspiration interventions	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	0
Behaviour interventions	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+3
Block scheduling	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	0
Collaborative learning	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+5
Digital technology	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+4
Early years interventions	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+5
Extending school time	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+2
Feedback	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+8
Homework (Primary)	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+2
Homework (Secondary)	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+5
Individualised instruction	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+3
Learning styles	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+2
Mastery learning	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+5
Mentoring	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	0
Metacognition and self-regulation	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+7
One to one tuition	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+5

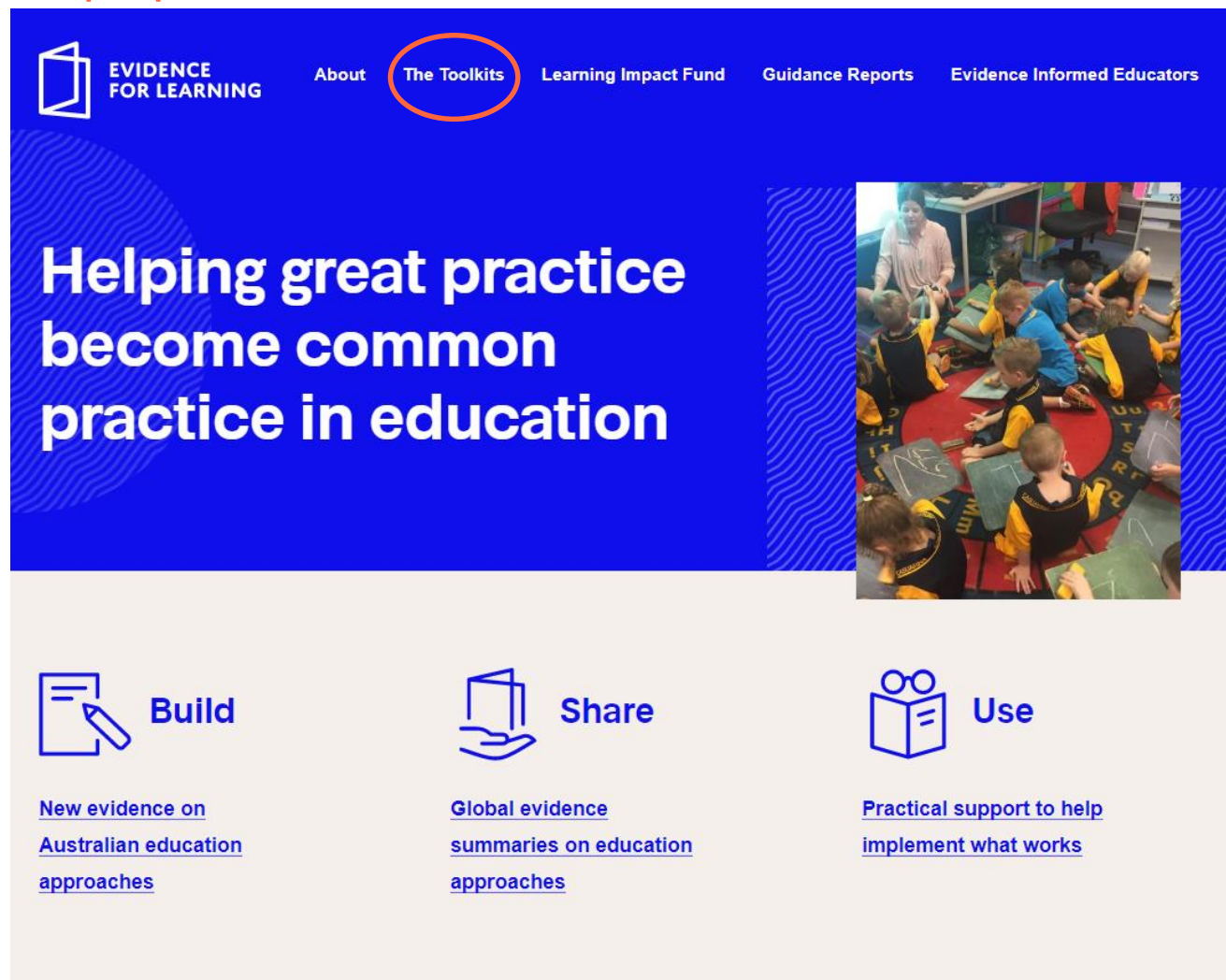
Oral language interventions	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+5
Outdoor adventure learning	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+4
Parental engagement	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+3
Peer tutoring	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+5
Performance pay	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+1
Phonics	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+4
Physical environment	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	0
Reading comprehension strategies	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+6
Reducing class size	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+3
Repeating a year	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	-4
School uniform	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	0
Setting or streaming	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	-1
Small group tuition	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+4
Social and emotional learning	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+4
Sports participation	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+2
Summer schools	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+2
Teaching assistants	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+1
Within-class achievement grouping	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒🔒🔒🔒🔒	+3

Accessing the Toolkits

Tablet or phone





Laptop



The Teaching & Learning Toolkit

Tablet or phone

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The Toolkits

Our Teaching and Learning Toolkit and the Early Childhood Education Toolkit are accessible summaries of education research. The two Toolkits are designed to support teachers, educators and school leaders who are making decisions about how to improve learning outcomes, particularly for children and young people from settings surrounded by disadvantage. The Toolkits do not make definitive claims as to what will work to improve outcomes in a given school. Rather they provide high quality information about what is likely to be beneficial based on existing evidence.

Laptop

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The Toolkits

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[The Teaching & Learning Toolkit](#)

[Early Childhood Education Toolkit](#)

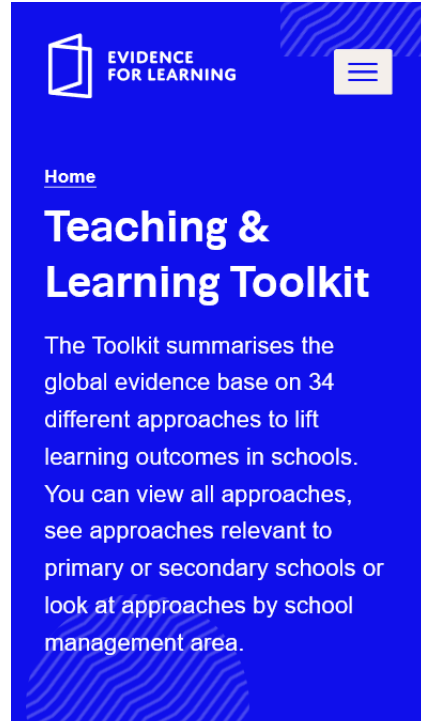
[About the Toolkits](#)

[Using the Toolkits](#)

evidenceforlearning.org.au/the-toolkits/

The Teaching & Learning Toolkit

Tablet or phone

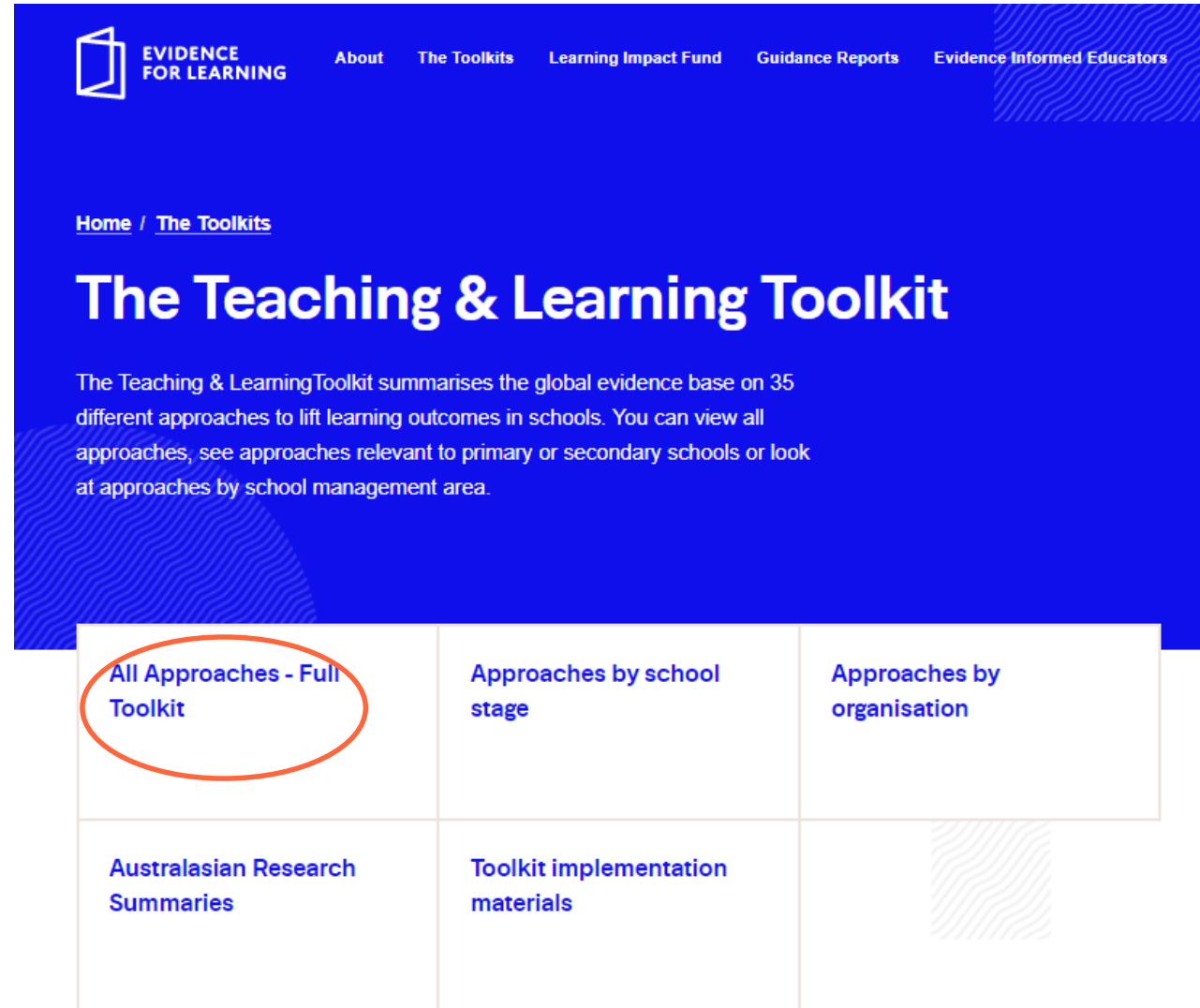


All Approaches - Full Toolkit

Approaches by school stage

Approaches by organisation

Laptop



All Approaches - Full Toolkit

Approaches by school stage

Approaches by organisation

Australasian Research Summaries

Toolkit implementation materials

evidenceforlearning.org.au/the-toolkits/the-teaching-and-learning-toolkit/

Sort by Name ▾	Average cost –	Evidence security –	Months' impact –
Oral language interventions	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒	+5
Outdoor adventure learning	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒	+4
Parental engagement	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒	+3
Peer tutoring	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒	+5
Performance pay	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒	+1

Average cost

The approximate cost of implementing an approach.

Evidence security

Based on the quantity and the methodological quality of the available evidence, and the reliability or consistency of impact estimates.

Months' impact

The additional months' progress you can expect students to make as a result of an approach being used.

Approach summary

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- 1 [What is it?](#)
- 2 [How effective is it?](#)
- 3 [How secure is the evidence?](#)
- 4 [What are the costs?](#)
- 5 [What should I consider?](#)
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Further reading

[Australasian Research Summary
Parental engagement in learning
Raising Children Network
Why it matters to transform parent
involvement from early childhood
to primary school
Nudging parents to be literacy
partners](#)

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Parental engagement

Moderate impact, moderate cost, based on moderate evidence	Average cost	Evidence security	Months' impact
	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒	+3
Developing effective parental engagement to improve their children's achievement is challenging.			

What is it?

We define parental engagement as the involvement of parents in supporting their children's academic learning. It includes:

- approaches and programs which aim to develop parental skills such as literacy or IT skills;
- general approaches which encourage parents to support their children with, for example reading or homework;
- the involvement of parents in their children's learning activities; and
- more intensive programs for families in crisis.

How effective is it?

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- 2 [How effective is it?](#)
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Further reading

[Australasian Research Summary
Parental engagement in learning
Raising Children Network](#)

Australasian Research Summary

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Parental engagement

Australasian Research Summary



The summary below presents the research evidence on parental engagement in the Australasian context.

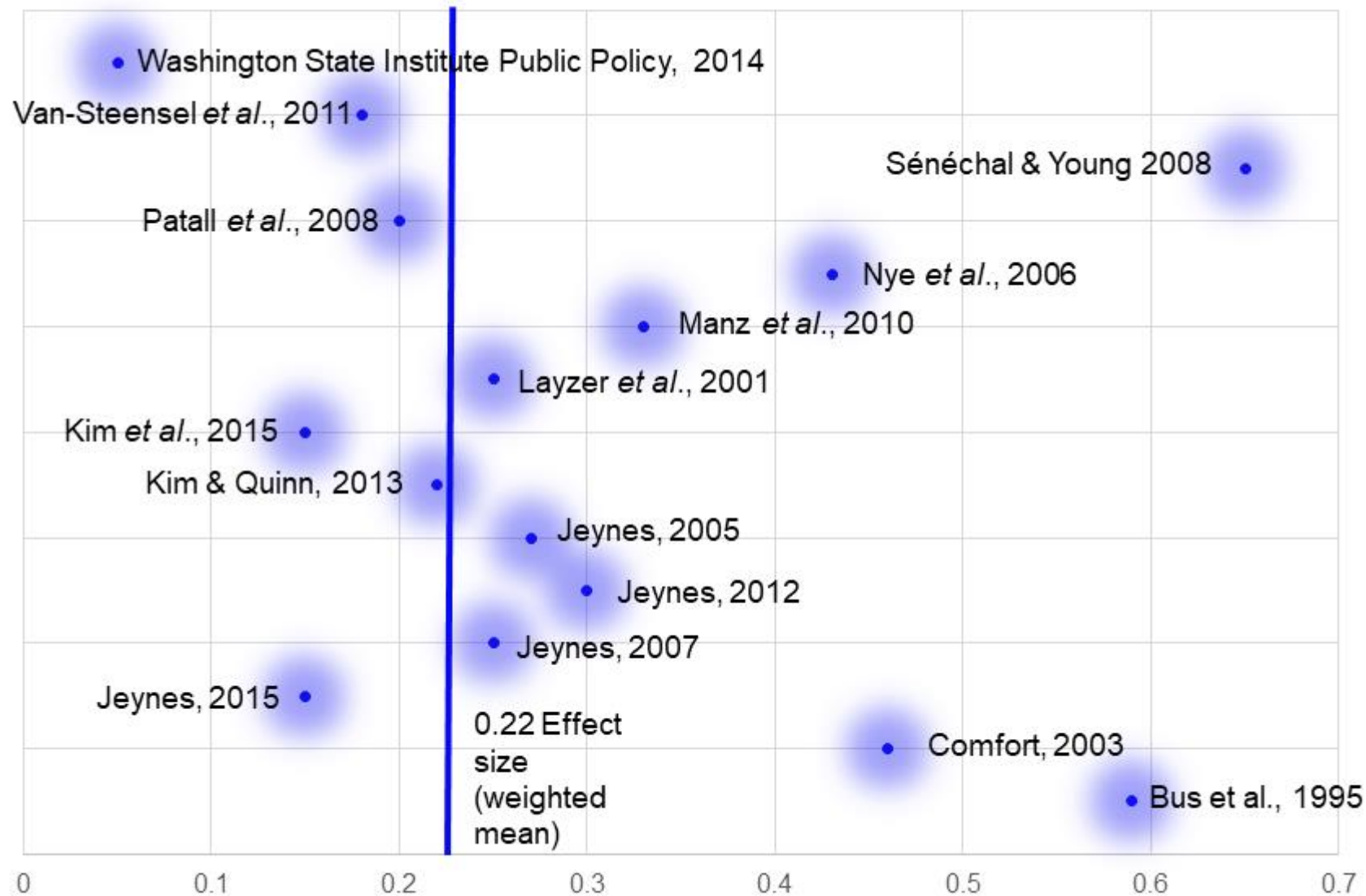
The Teaching & Learning Toolkit focuses on impact; it presents an estimate of the average impact of parental engagement on learning progress, based on the synthesis of a large number of quantitative studies from around the world.

This page offers a summary and analysis of individual Australasian studies on parental engagement. In contrast to the Toolkit it includes studies which do not

Contents

- 1 [Summary of Australasian Research](#)
- 2 [References](#)
- 3 [Databases searched](#)
- 4 [Search Terms](#)

Understanding the variability of impact



The Guidance Report draft recommendations

Summary of recommendations

1

Critically review how you work with parents



Schools should be optimistic about the potential of working with parents

- There is an established link between the home learning environment at all ages and children's performance at school.
- Schools and parents have a shared priority to deliver the best outcomes for their children.

However, evidence on effective strategies that schools can use to engage parents in their children's learning is mixed

- If the aim is solely to improve academic outcomes, classroom interventions working directly with children currently have more evidence of effectiveness at improving learning than parenting interventions with the same aim.
- Working effectively with parents can be challenging and is likely to require sustained effort and support.
- Most schools say that they do not have an explicit plan for how they work with parents, and fewer than 10% of teachers have undertaken professional learning (PL) on parental engagement.

Schools should start by critically reviewing their aims and current approaches

- Focus on areas that have better evidence (such as those summarised below) – different approaches are needed for different ages.
- Talk to parents who are less involved about what support they would find helpful.
- Plan and monitor progress towards defined aims.

2



Provide practical strategies to support learning at home

- For young children, promoting shared book reading should be a central component of any parental engagement approach. Home learning activities, such as playing with letters and numbers, are also linked to improved outcomes.
- Tips, support, and resources can make home activities more effective – for example, where they prompt longer and more frequent conversations during book reading.
- Book-gifting alone is unlikely to be effective, but carefully selected books plus advice and support can be beneficial for supporting reading.
- Support parents to create a regular routine and encourage good homework habits but be cautious about promoting direct parental assistance with homework (particularly for older children).
- Parents can support their children by encouraging them to set goals, plan, and manage their time, effort, and emotions. This type of support can help children to regulate their own learning and will often be more valuable than direct help with homework tasks.
- Consider initiatives to encourage summer reading; these have some promise but are not widely used at present.

3



Tailor school communications to encourage positive dialogue about learning

- Well-designed school communications can be effective for improving attainment and a range of other outcomes, such as attendance.
- Examples include weekly texts sent from school to parents, and short, termly letters.
- Impacts from such approaches may appear small but they are generally low cost, and straightforward to introduce.
- Messages are likely to be more effective if they are personalised, linked to learning, and promote positive interactions by, for example, celebrating success.
- Communication should be two-way: consulting with parents about how they can be involved is likely to be valuable and increase the effectiveness of home-school relationships. In a large-scale survey of parents in the UK, around half of parents say that they have not been consulted.
- School communications may be particularly important for engaging some parents/carers who could play an important role but may have less contact with school.

4



Offer more sustained and intensive support where needed

- Start by assessing needs and talking to parents about what would help them support learning: targeting is likely to be needed to use resources effectively and avoid widening gaps.
- Communicate carefully to avoid stigmatising, blaming, or discouraging parents. Focus on building parents' efficacy – that they are equal partners and can make a difference.
- Encourage a consistent approach to behaviour between parents and the school, for example, by sharing expectations with parents.
- Offering more structured, evidence-based programs can help to develop positive behaviour and consistency where needs are greater.
- Plan carefully for group-based parenting initiatives (such as regular workshops). A convenient time and location, face-to-face recruitment, trusting relationships, and an informal, welcoming environment are the most important factors for parents to attend group sessions.
- Consider offering regular home visits for younger children with greater needs. This can be an effective approach for parents that struggle to attend meetings, and for building relationships.

Critically review how you work with parents

- There is no one-size fits all approach.
- Be optimistic about the potential of working with parents.
- Evidence on effective strategies to work with parents to improve student's learning is mixed.
- Critically review your aims and current approaches.



Provide practical strategies to support learning at home

- Support parents in a way that is appropriate for the age of the student(s).
- Support to make home activities more effective – moving from reading to having conversations during reading.
- Setting up positive routines to encourage strong habits.
- Consider summer reading initiatives – an area of promise.



Tailor school communication to encourage positive dialogue about learning

- Well-designed communication can be effective in improving attainment and attendance.
- Low cost, straightforward, easy entry for parents.
- Two-way communication to build relationships.
- Tailor messages for groups of parents where necessary.



Offer more sustained and intensive support where needed

- Talk to parents to understand what would help them support learning, and plan with their needs in mind.
- All communication should start from the premise that parents are equal partners in learning.
- Establish expectations to encourage a consistent approach to behaviour.



In conversation



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Questions?

Please use the Q&A box to ask any questions of Barbara, Tanya or Susannah



Considerations and reflections

Considerations for teachers and leaders

- Are the parents of your students ready to engage in this way?
- Have you considered what is required to establish trust with your school (how do you get them through the gate)?

Questions for reflection

- As a school leader, are there structures in your school that support teachers to engage parents in a constructive way (through student-led conferences, or digital platforms)?
- As a teacher, how can you enable parents to support student learning? What do they need to know, relevant to their child's age and development?

Where to now?

- Join our Evidence Informed Educator Network evidenceforlearning.org.au/evidence-informed-educators/join/
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