Koroit & District Primary School

- Snapshots of connections with parents

Getting the message to parents
Koroit & District Primary School trialled Component 3 in 2012. All staff and some parents attended the training which reinforced the importance of engaging parents and carers, and the local community. This also coincided with a course that the Principal and three staff had attended about ‘Leading Communities’. Another reason for improving communication with families was based on knowledge of past negative experience of school for some parents. So there were new opportunities to work against an ‘us and them’ gap.

Getting onto Facebook
The school thought a lot about the potential of Facebook to communicate with parents and carers. The staff had extensive discussions on protocols for using it as a ‘formal’ way to connect to parents.

"... We use Facebook a lot now. Good news stories include details about classroom learning, and achievements of individual students. Recently we had to inform parents that swimming lessons were cancelled for the next day. We put the message onto Facebook and parents knew before the kids arrived home."

Michelle Miller, Principal

Banning meetings
In the past, many parents did not attend school events at the school. It became clear the term, 'meeting', was a disincentive for parents and carers. So a different approach was needed.

When the Principal wanted to talk with parents of Year 6 students about their completion of primary school and future education, a proportion of parents did not up for the evening meetings. In this case, the solution was to invite parents of each Year 6 student to a 15 minute conversation to talk about transition. It has proved a break through. Nearly all parents have responded to the invitation, and the conversations go way beyond the 15 minutes.

"... Component 3 made us more aware about how we involve parents and families. We now use different ways to communicate. We send individually addressed invitations to events in envelopes and get our message to parents in a personal way. We include accessible tips on education and wellbeing in parent newsletters, and we’re using social media."

Michelle Miller, Principal

The most important rule is to use it for ‘good news stories’ and information. Complaints are not part of the Facebook conversation for Koroit & District Primary School community. They are addressed through other means.
Parent conferences and involving students
The school now involves students from Prep to Year 6 in parent conferences. Teachers work with students to prepare for the sessions to capture the progress in their learning. Students develop a vocabulary to explain their goals and demonstrate their achievements using lap tops and other ICT.

As Michelle says, It's a way to take out the direct role of the teacher from the scenario. We want to give students ownership of their learning and the formal opportunity to communicate their learning with their parents.

Good news stories
How does the school assist students to share their growth? Students share some achievements with their parents every day.

... We do everything we can to make each day positive. A school review a few years ago showed that students went home with ‘grumbles’ and negative stories. We’re changing that. At the end of each day, teachers focus on positive experiences for everyone. Students go home and tell their parents about their learning.

Michelle Miller, Principal

Community book boxes
In 2012 Koroit & District Primary School students constructed 12 book boxes to distribute reading materials, student work and wellbeing tips in the community.

The pre-cut wood was donated by a hardware store, and Indigenous students from nearby Warmambool Clontarf Academy assisted classes with building boxes. The Koroit students painted each box with different local themes like dairy cows, Irish emblems, football teams and landmarks.

KidsMatter Primary parenting tips and a selection of story books for students are included in the boxes. They have been dropped off at the local laundromat; milk bars; vet clinic; bakery and restaurant for parents and families in the community who might want to read the materials while waiting in different venues. This is another way of the school spreading the message of wellbeing in the community.

Koroit and District Primary School
Victoria

- Is 17 kms northwest of Warrnambool
- Enrols 116 students from Prep to Year 6
- Has the motto, “I learn, we belong, together we achieve”
- Involves students in decision-making through weekly class conferences
- Uses a House system to develop student pride and belonging and weekly mentor groups

www.koroitps.global2.vic.edu.au

... We had a ‘Parent Toolbox night’ in 2012 and that was really successful. We provided childcare and food, and parents came to hear about strategies to assist their child.

Michelle Miller, Principal

When a student does well in a reading or Maths task, or takes on a leadership role, teachers might ask her/him to ring up their parent and tell them about their success. Or a teacher might put a sticky note on a student’s lunch box summarising something she/he has accomplished that day. Before and after school, teachers leave their classrooms and chat with parents in the yard.