

Building Productive Partnerships

Schools and P&C Associations working together to support student learning outcomes and wellbeing





Acknowledgement of country



We recognise the Ongoing Custodians of the lands and waterways where we work and live. We pay respect to Elders past and present as ongoing teachers of knowledge, songlines and stories.

We strive to ensure every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learner in NSW achieves their potential through education.

Overview

Document Title: **Building Productive Partnerships**

Who is this for: School principals and P&C Associations across all school settings.

Purpose: This resource supports principals and their local P&C Association to clarify their respective roles and responsibilities

- establish their agreed ways of working together
- reflect on and develop their processes and practices for collaboration.
- support schools and P&C Associations where issues or conflict arise.

How to use this: Schools and P&C Associations may use the resource or sections of, throughout the school year. Suggestions for use with school and P&C Association activities are included on page 4. Discussion prompts are also included for consideration. The time allocated to each slide (page) will vary, depending on the group size and length of conversation.

The research: Focus group and public consultations with school staff, P&C Associations and parents and carers from across NSW have informed development of this resource. Over 600 survey responses have helped inform this resource.

Consultation: The resource was developed in collaboration with the P&C Federation NSW. Consultation included input from Student and Parent Experience including Feedback and Complaints Resolution, Legal Services, principal associations, school staff and P&C Associations.

Reviewed in 2023: Student and Parent Experience and P&C Federation NSW.

Updated: 15 December 2023.

Alignment:

This work is aligned to the:

- **DoE and P&C Federation Partnership Agreement**
- **School Excellence Framework Version 3**

Leading Domain:

Education leadership: Community engagement

School planning, implementation and reporting: Strategic Improvement Plan

School resources: Community use of facilities

Management practices and processes: Service delivery

- **Wellbeing Framework for Schools**

Enabling environment: Collaborative partnerships are built with students, staff, families, communities and other organisations to support and develop students and school communities

- **Plan for NSW Public Education**

Every student learns, grows and belongs in an equitable and outstanding education system.

- **Australian Professional Standard for Principals**

Professional Practice: Engaging and working with the community.

Existing resources

- **Parent and Carer Engagement Framework and Principles**
- **School Community Charter**
- **Complaints Handling Policy**

A comprehensive list of resources and links is included on page 25.

How to use this resource

Building Productive Partnerships has been designed for the use of schools and P&C Associations. Principals and P&C Association executive are encouraged to review and jointly decide the best timing to present each section, or in its entirety, if preferred. The table below highlights some opportunities, where each section or individual slide could be shared and discussed, such as a joint presentation to P&C Association members, parents and carers, or referred to by individuals, as needed.

Context	Example activity	1. Benefits of working in partnership	2. Roles and responsibilities	3. Working together	4. Resolving concerns and conflict	5. Support and resources
School-led activities or discussion	School orientation (Kinder/Parent orientation)	E.g.: Presentation on the benefits of working in partnership		E.g.: Presentation on benefits of working together		
	School planning (self-assessment/ EV)			E.g.: Presentation as part of strategy for Community Engagement		E.g.: access to DoE resources for ongoing support/ guidance
	Communications to community	E.g.: as the base for a newsletter item about the benefits of the P&C Association's support		E.g.: as the base for a newsletter item about how parents can get involved	E.g.: joint presentation with P&C about process for raising issues	
	Executive support/PL		E.g.: clarify their role, responsibilities and P&C Association functions	E.g.: to reflect on and consider opportunities to enhance practice	E.g.: clarify process for addressing/ raising issues	E.g.: access to DoE resources for ongoing support/ guidance
P&C Association-led activities or discussion	AGM		E.g.: Presentation to clarify specific roles, responsibilities, functions	E.g.: discussion to establish shared expectations for operations		
	Sub-committee meetings		E.g.: for reference to clarify functions	E.g.: for reference to clarify functions	E.g.: clarify process for addressing/ raising issues	
	Induction of Office bearers	E.g.: to consider and discuss agreed focus for working in partnership	E.g.: clarify their role, responsibilities and functions of P&C Association	E.g.: to reflect on and consider opportunities to enhance practice		E.g.: access to P&C Federation's resources and member portal for ongoing support/ guidance

Introduction

Building Productive Partnerships has been developed to support schools and their local P&C Associations build positive, respectful and collaborative relationships that benefit all students and learners and their school communities.

This resource looks at:

1. **Benefits of working in partnership:** an overview of the benefits for students, parents/carers, schools, P&C Associations and school communities.
2. **Roles and responsibilities:** to help develop a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities and value of the partnership between schools and P&C Associations.
3. **Working together:** to help establish agreed ways of working together that mutually respects each other's roles, responsibilities and obligations.
4. **Resolving concerns and conflict:** so that schools and P&C Associations have clear processes to support engagement, communication and to resolve conflict if needed.
5. **Support and resources:** including information about who to contact for advice, and a suite of resources to support schools and P&C Associations.

At each section, take time to consider how the information relates to your setting.

You might like to discuss:

- Where are we at – has the school vision been shared so that the P&C Association can contribute to its success?
- What's working well?
- What else might strengthen our working partnership?



1

Benefits of working in partnership

Principals and P&C Associations

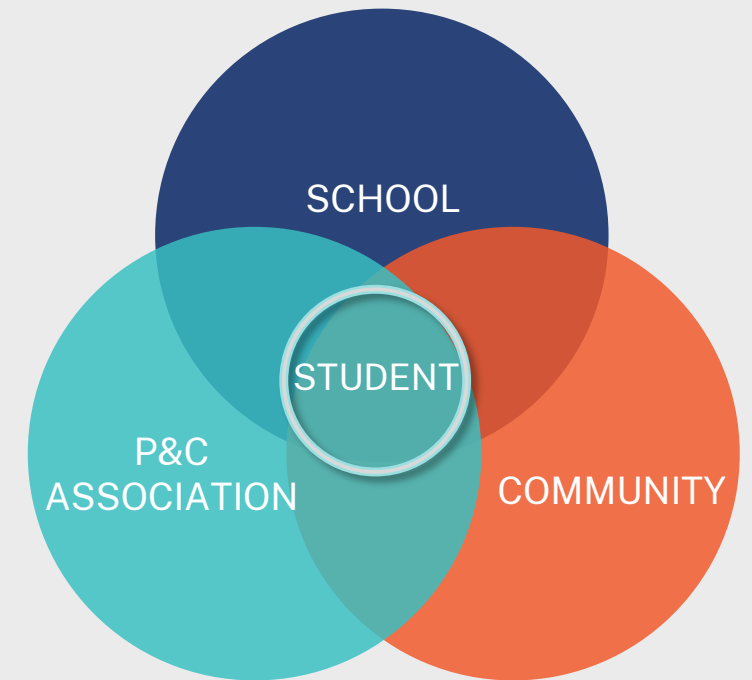
Benefits of working in partnership

We know strong partnerships across education communities, between students, parent and carers, teachers, educators, school and department staff, help to foster engagement and positive learning and wellbeing outcomes.

The productive partnerships of schools and P&C Associations aims to achieve the following:

- students benefit from the school's planned and proactive engagement with parents/ carers and the broader community.
- student learning is enriched by positive connections between schools, parents, carers and community.
- parent participation in their child's education is supported.
- the collective voice of parents and carers is valued.
- the work of P&C Associations in school communities is supported, promoted and recognised.
- school communities are strengthened and engaged.
- the school vision is shared and cultivated across the school community.

When we genuinely value and engage with our school community, the positive values, attitudes and behaviours for learning are adopted beyond the school's boundaries. Effective in-school strategies for improving student outcomes will then be more widely successful when undertaken in partnership with the community.



Our shared focus on parent and community engagement to enhance student outcomes.

Schools and P&C Associations partnerships

We work collaboratively to foster a shared commitment in achieving the best educational outcomes for children and young people.

We do this by:

- Promoting the interests of the school and its students.
- Contributing to a positive school culture and representing the school in the broader community.
- Establishing and maintaining productive working relationships.
- Complying with legislative requirements and obligations including the duty of care, privacy and discrimination law (*those relating to schools, and those relating to P&C Associations*).
- Respecting the responsibilities of each (*schools and P&C Association*).
- Promoting and upholding the School Community Charter.
- Providing services such as uniform shops, canteens and OSHC (where agreed).



The Department has committed to 5 key principles in its approach to engaging with parents/carers

Principals and P&C Associations are encouraged to consider these principles in how they collaborate together



Enable access

Provide a safe and welcoming environment

Make it easy for parents and carers to participate

Support them to understand the school environment



Communicate openly

Keep parents and carers informed and make it easy for them to understand

Make it easy for parents and carers to communicate with you

Provide a timely response



Partner together

Be clear about what parents and carers can expect and what is expected from them

Partner with parents and carers to achieve shared goals

Follow up on discussions



Understand context

Invite their perspective

Listen

Show you understand their individual circumstances



Guide choices

Clearly explain any choices

Be clear about how decisions are made

Include parents and carers in decisions about their child

2

Roles and responsibilities

Principals and P&C Associations

The role of the Principal

The principal is responsible for the leadership and management of the school.

By virtue of their position, the Principal or anyone acting in that capacity is automatically an Ex-Officio Member of the P&C Association and all of the P&C Association's sub-committees.

Where practicable, the Principal attends all general meetings, the AGM and may also attend sub-committee meetings.

The Principal responds to questions arising and offers advice on Department policy and guidelines.

They can move, speak to and vote on motions (unless acting as the Returning Officer at the AGM).

Where a Principal is unable to attend a meeting of the P&C Association, a Principal's representative from the Staff may attend on their behalf.

Principals promote parental and carer engagement as a key aspect of raising the achievement of all students. Collaboration with the P&C Association helps develop mutually supportive and trusting relationships with the community to support engagement in the life of the school.



The role of P&C Associations

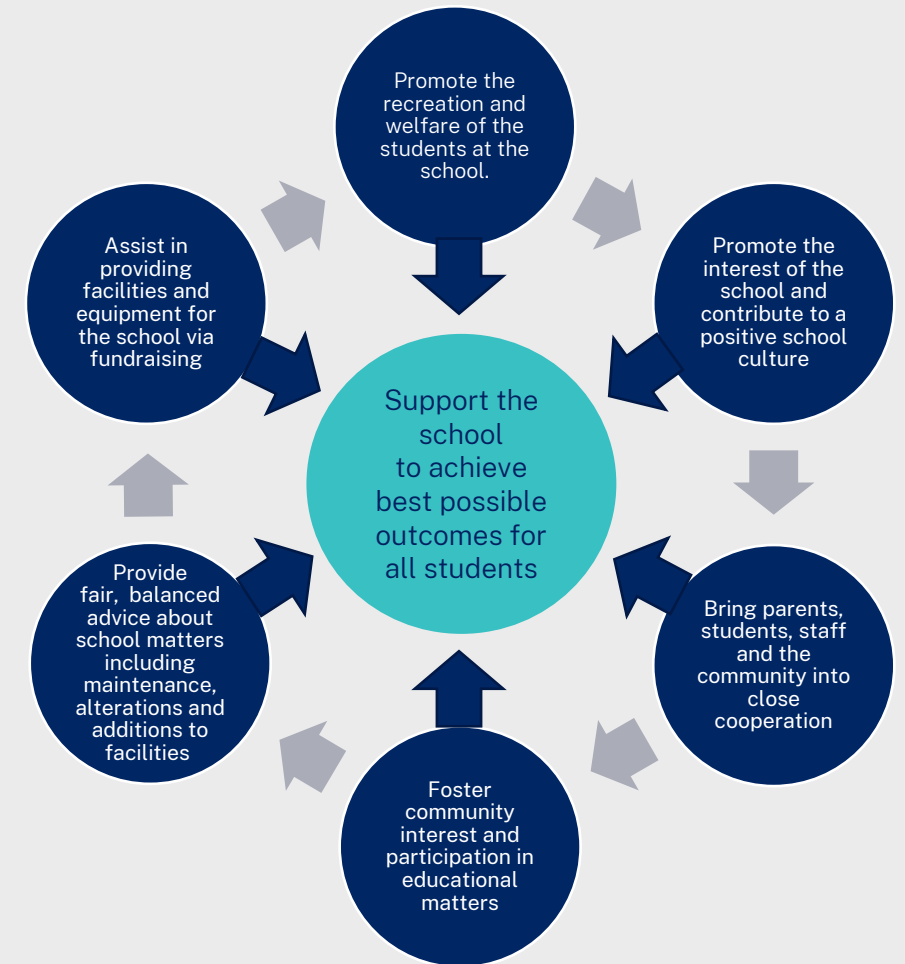
The Education Act 1990 sets out the key role of P&C Associations as:

- to promote the interests of the school by bringing parents, citizens, students and teaching staff into close co-operation;
- and
- to assist in providing facilities and equipment for the school and in promoting the recreation and welfare of the students at the school.

The P&C Association shall not exercise any authority over teaching staff or any matter relating to the control or management of the school

P&C Association Constitution Clause 3

Due to privacy obligations, issues with individual students or school staff should always be referred to the Principal and not discussed at P&C Association meetings.



The role of the P&C Federation

- To promote public education and to facilitate community involvement in public education.
- To work in the interests of students and parents of students in NSW government schools.
- To co-operate with the Department and community organisations having an interest in public education, in relation to the matters involving public education.
- To assist P&C Associations in carrying out their functions or activities.
- To establish and expend funds both for the general conduct of the P&C Federation and to enable the P&C Federation to carry out its aims and objectives.
- To advocate for students in public education and P&C Association across NSW in various ways.

The P&C Federation is a peak advisory body, and advocates for public education in New South Wales. It is incorporated by Parents and Citizens Associations Incorporation Act 1976.

The P&C Federation is not a regulatory body. Federation staff provide resources to member P&C Associations, including employment related legal advice.

The Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales is commonly known as “The P&C Federation”.

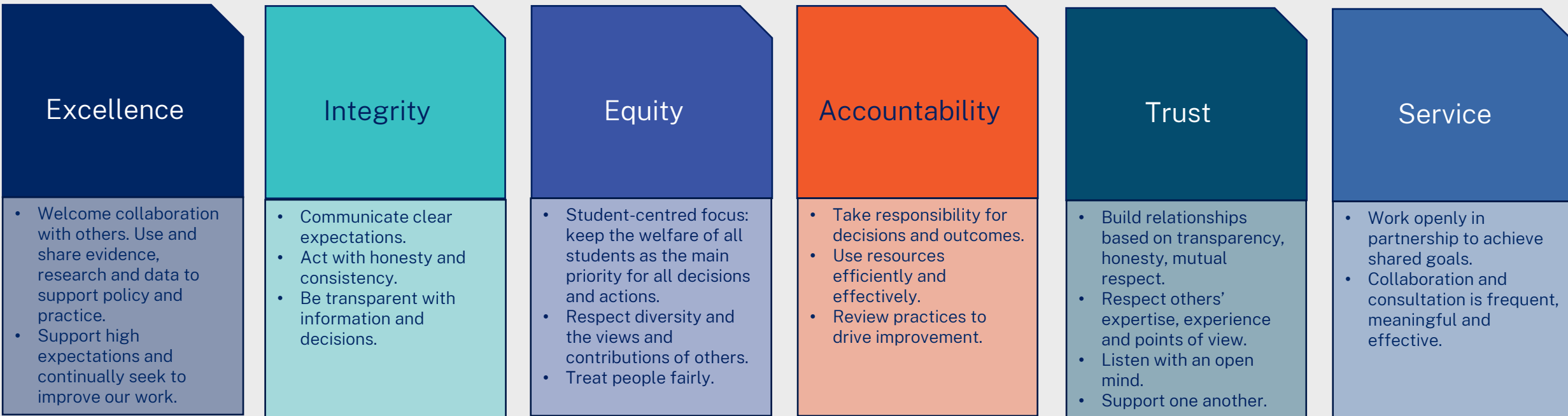
3

Working together

Shared values and responsibilities

Values that support how we work together

By fostering a culture of respect and collaboration, we can create inclusive environments and forge strong connections for thriving school communities.



Discussion

- Where are we at – are the values evident when we meet?
- What's working well?
- Are there areas we could strengthen to support our working partnership?

Partnerships in practice

Bronte Public School and P&C Association

Bronte Public School is supported by a strong, independent P&C Association that works tirelessly for the benefit of the school and its students. Together, they look to build on the school's teaching and learning programs, to make the school look beautiful and to support all students to reach their social, emotional, and academic potential.

With a strategic focus of 'Building Partnerships', the principles for effective engagement are reflected in the school and P&C Association's ways of working collaboratively.

Partner together: Be clear about what parents and carers can expect and what is expected from them

The school and P&C Association have found it helpful to regularly refer to the objects of their Constitution:

- a. to promote the interests of the school by bringing parents, citizens, students and teaching staff into close co-operation; and
- b. to assist in providing facilities and equipment for the school and in promoting the recreation and welfare of the students at the school.

This reminds others of the role of the P&C Association and keeps the group focused on equity and inclusiveness for all students.

Partner together: Partner with parents and carers to achieve shared goals

The school newsletter regularly promotes their P&C Association and the Principal actively encourages parents to be involved.

'I tap people on the shoulder that are already doing things for the school.., I tell them, 'I'd love to work with you on the P&C', as sometimes they don't have this on their radar.'

The school and P&C Association collaborate to provide equipment and facilities aligned with school priorities. In the past, this has included school playground improvements, music programs, CAPA resources and technology to support student learning.

Communicate openly: Keep parents and carers informed and make it easy for them to understand

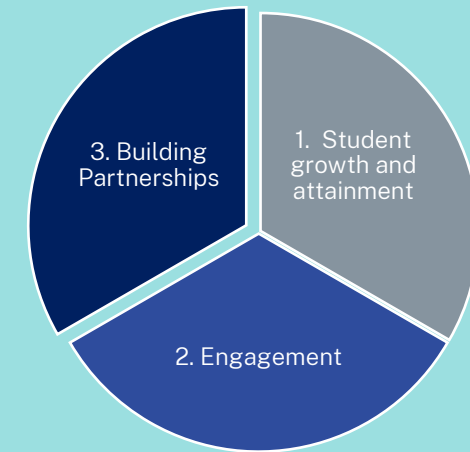
Bronte P&C Association meets eight times per year, with approximately ten people at every meeting. During Zoom meetings, no less than 15 parents may attend.

The principal takes this opportunity to present a comprehensive report at every meeting, thanking the P&C Association for their ongoing support and showcasing students' and teachers' work at the school.



**Together,
we can do so much**

Principal
Bronte Public School



Bronte Public School
Strategic Improvement Plan (2021-2024)

Through 'Building Partnerships', the school aims to inspire collaboration and innovation between all stakeholders and the wider community.

This is a great example of how Bronte PS is applying the principles of the Department of Education's Parent and Carer Engagement Framework (see Slide 9 for more detail).

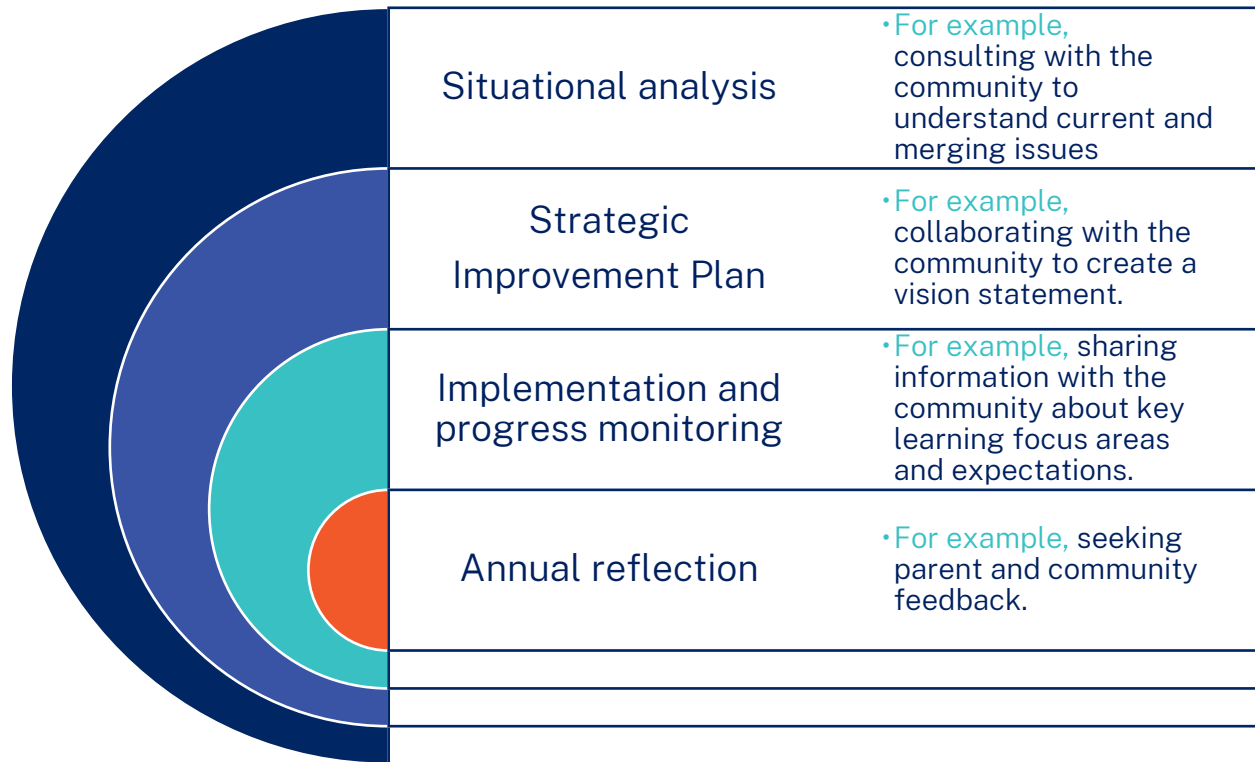
Principal and P&C Association - partnership in practice

Responsibilities of the principal and P&C Association are aligned to achieve key functions.

Principal - responsibility	Function	P&C Executive - responsibility
Promote the importance of the P&C Association as a voice of parents and carers in the school. Attend meetings as a member and monitor the P&C Association's compliance with its objectives, functions, and legislative and financial responsibilities	P&C Association meetings (general, AGM & special) Links to School Excellence Version 3	Organise, conduct and facilitate meetings as per the constitution and by-laws.
Report on school operations at each general meeting.	Reporting	Report on P&C Association operations and finances. Minute all reports.
Provide advice and guidance on DoE policy, curriculum, school operations & facility usage and ensure that the voices of families not on the P&C are considered in discussions around school operations and future directions.	Advice and guidance Links to School Excellence Version 3	Provide feedback and guidance to the principal when requested. Advise on the P&C Association's policy.
Consult with parents through the P&C Association on relevant educational matters, school operations and materials, including where possible, the development of the vision, values and priorities of the school.	School business and planning Links to School Excellence Version 3	Provide a conduit for parent consultation. Deliver on each of the functions of a P&C Association in support of the school.
Parents and community members have the opportunity to engage in a range of school related activities which help build the school as a cohesive educational community and enhance sense of belonging.	Community engagement Links to School Excellence Version 3	Bring parents, students, staff and the community into close cooperation.
Consult with the P&C Association about requests for funding. Support the P&C Associations objectives as much as possible. Consider (and approve) the business case to operate a school-based amenity. Manage the purchase of equipment and large value items. Authorise the hire of the school premises and facilities	Purchasing and Facilities Links to School Excellence Version 3	Consult with the Principal about use of facilities, donation of funds and proposed P&C Association activities. Manage business operations for canteen, uniform shop, bookshop, OSHC etc. if relevant. Donate funds to the school if relevant and appropriate.
Understand the Constitution under which the P&C Association operates.	Constitution	Understand, and follow the Constitution under which they operate.
Promote and support the P&C Association to communicate important information about elections through school channels	Election of members	Organise, conduct and facilitate election processes as per the constitution.

Partnerships in practice

Schools and P&C Associations can work together to support the school vision and context, as described below.



Discussion

- Are there other opportunities to include parents and carers?
- Is parent involvement representative of the whole school community?

Community engagement is a critical factor for improving the progress, achievement and wellbeing of our students.

The Department of Education's School Excellence Framework (SEF) describes the importance of community engagement in schools.

When schools, families and the broader community work together to develop positive connections, students thrive.

Partnerships in practice

Wheeler Heights Public School and P&C Association initiative

Poor driving and parking behaviour around the school was putting the school community at great risk and the reason why the P & C Association's Traffic and Safety Committee took on the challenge of changing this.

Their "Drive and Park Safely Near Schools Initiative" targeted behavioural change through a robust process that included:

- establishing baseline data through observing and documenting unsafe driving and parking behaviour
- providing the data and examples of unsafe driving and parking to the local council for their consideration
- consulting with the school community about their road safety concerns
- collaborating with the local council's Road Safety Officer to address the concerns and develop strategies to better manage the traffic environment
- preparing school community resources, including maps of safety hotspots
- educating the school community about legal and safe driving and parking via social media, the Flexi Schools app and school newsletters.

Discussion

- How might we respond to similar or emerging challenges?
- Are there processes, structures or resources that will help?



Drive and park safely near schools
Prepared by Wheeler Heights Public School and the Parents and Citizens Association in consultation with Northern Beaches Council
October 2023

Getting serious about driver behaviour
In 2023, Northern Beaches Council Road Safety team coordinated a review of road safety around Wheeler Heights Public School with the aim of identifying traffic issues and opportunities to improve road and pedestrian safety for our community.
Driver behaviour remains an ongoing concern and this document seeks to illustrate and inform parents and carers of safety hotspots.
Education combined with enforcement and penalties, including fines, demerit points and licence suspension, all aim to motivate road users to follow the rules and behave safely around our school.
If you see a parent or carer driving or parking illegally around our school and feel comfortable to do so, have a respectful conversation with them. Alternatively report unsafe driving and parking to:
Crimestoppers 1800 333 000
Northern Beaches Council 1300 434 434
Ongoing reporting and documentation help us understand safety issues and we actively encourage parents and citizens to get in touch.
Wheeler Heights Public School
Parents & Citizens Association
traffic.safety@whps.pandc.org

Working towards zero
The NSW road toll isn't simply a number. It is people. Sadly, it's closer to home than you think. It's people like you. Grandparents, mothers, fathers, children. And it's a number that's unacceptable, no matter how small it gets, until it gets to zero.
That should be the aim for all of us - government, law enforcement, business, communities, families, and individuals - we should work together to do everything in our power to push the number of deaths on New South Wales roads towards zero.
© State of New South Wales (reproduced by permission)

Safety issues map
Parking signs are placed with your child's safety in mind. Please park safely near your child's school. Do not park in the school zone.
Our community has an obligation to our children and we encourage all our parents and carers to do their part to drive and park safely near schools.

Driving and parking issues around our school
Illegal driving and parking behaviour around schools puts children at risk.

Common school zone offences around our school
References

information sheet developed by Wheeler Heights PS for Drive and park safely near schools

4

Resolving concerns and conflict

Raising concerns and resolving grievances

In the event of a problem arising, the first approach is to discuss the matter with the appropriate person. The Department and P&C Federation's Complaints Handling Guidelines provides detailed advice for schools and P&C Associations.

Principles for resolving concerns or grievances

- Grievances are treated confidentially.
- Concerns should be raised as early as possible after the incident relating to the complaint has occurred.
- Complainants should not instigate grievances that are frivolous, vexatious or malicious.

Is it really a P&C Association matter?



Where an issue is raised regarding individual children or families, this is not a P&C Association matter and the people involved or affected need to make an approach to the Principal directly.

If you find your P&C Association discussing personal matters, ask the President to move on to the next item of business.

What if the P&C Association has a problem regarding the school?



Where a problem regarding the school occurs, the P&C Association's Officers should arrange to discuss the matter with the Principal.

If the complaint relates to the school principal, the department's online [complaint form](#) can be used. This will be shared with the Director Educational Leadership responsible for the school to decide the best approach to resolve the issue.

The P&C Federation can also provide advice on P&C Association operations, obligation and responsibilities to help resolve issues.

What if the grievance relates to another member, volunteer or P&C Association employee?



The P&C Association's complaints process, including code of conduct, complaints, or grievance policy should be actioned.

Complainants should try to resolve the issue themselves with the relevant parties.

If it cannot be resolved, the complainant should provide written details to the P&C Association President or Vice President where the complaint is about the P&C Association President.

What if the Principal has a problem with the P&C Association?



The P&C Association's complaints process including code of conduct, complaints or grievance policy should be actioned.

The principal may seek advice of the Department's Feedback and Complaints or Legal Services.

The P&C Federation can also provide advice and guidance on P&C Association operations, obligations and responsibilities to help resolve issues.

Raising concerns and resolving grievances

Support to resolve significant conflict and issues

Matters where there is significant conflict or issue may be dealt with in collaboration with the P&C Federation and the Department's Feedback and Complaints team. See contact details on slide 24.

A complaints handling process is being developed to support P&C Associations and schools.

Other supports

The Department's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) may be engaged (via the Feedback and Complaints team) to assist in restoring relationships between schools and parents that have broken down.

An independent mediator may assist, as part of the ADR process.

Additionally, P&C Associations may seek support from Community Justice Centres which can also offer independent resolution services.



5

Support and resources



For more information



The P&C Federation NSW

As the peak body for P&C Associations in NSW, we provide advice, support and advocacy for 1800 member P&C Associations and growing.

We represent the interests of parents and students in NSW government schools.

You can contact us at

Web: www.pandc.org.au

Phone: 1300 885 982

Email: mail@pandc.org.au

Department of Education

The Department of Education's Feedback and Complaints team supports parents, carers and schools to resolve issues and is working with schools to enhance complaints resolution capability.

Please use this [form](#) to request assistance.



Resources and references

[Together in partnership - NSW Department of Education and P&C Federation NSW Partnership Agreement](#)

P&C Federation NSW

- [Member guide and sample documents](#), including
 - Code of Conduct for P&C Associations
 - Grievance, Complaints and Procedures Policy
 - Social Media Policy
- [Member resources](#):
- [FAQs](#), including
 - Lines of Communication
 - Grievance, Complaints and Disputes Procedures
- [P&C e-bulletin](#)
- [P&C Member Portal](#) including access to professional learning for Office Bearers
- Parent and Carer Hub, including online community

Legislation

[Education Act \(1990\) - Part 11](#)

[Parent and Citizens Associations Incorporation Act \(1976\)](#)

[Associations Incorporated Act \(2009\)](#)

Department of Education

- [Authentic Community Engagement](#)
- [Building Relationships with Aboriginal Families in Schools](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#) and [Code of Conduct resources](#)
- [Community use of facilities – P&C Association activities](#)
- [Getting involved with your child's school](#)
- [Parents and Citizens Association activities](#)
- [Parent and Carer Engagement Framework and Principles](#)
- [Respectful Workplaces](#)
- [School Community Charter](#)
- [School Excellence Framework V3](#)

Feedback and Complaints

- [Alternative Dispute Resolution](#)
- [Complaint, compliment or suggestion form](#)
- [Making a complaint about NSW public schools – guide for parents and carers](#)
- [School community and consumer complaints](#)
- [Your feedback](#)

Professional learning for education staff

[3Cs Conversation Model \(MyPL ID:AC00611\)](#)



Please scan the QR code to provide feedback on this resource.
The Department and the P&C Federation NSW will use this to improve resources.

Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW

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