



School and community: **working together** What Works. The Work Program

Improving outcomes for Indigenous students

INFORMATION FOR INDIGENOUS PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES

Learning at home and at school

- If we learn all the time, what's school for?
- Why is homework important?

We learn from the time we are born. The people we live with, what they tell us and in what languages, and how they treat us are all sources of knowledge and understanding. Their behaviour and attitudes, their stories and ideas about good ways to live are what our culture is. All of these form the basis for further learning.

Learning at home and at school need to be connected. Taking an interest and understanding what your child is learning at school is one of the most important ways to support your child's success at school.

This pamphlet will help you understand the importance of learning at home and at school.

CONVERSATIONS > RELATIONSHIPS > PARTNERSHIPS > YOU CAN'T HAVE A PARTNERSHIP WITHOUT A RELATIONSHIP, AND YOU CAN'T HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITHOUT A CONVERSATION. YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE THE CONVERSATION. EVERYTHING STARTS HERE...

Learning at home and at school

Learning starts with birth

What we learn before the time we go to school is most important. We learn more than we do at any other period of our lives. We get new information through our senses — sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell. Sight is very important. ‘Seeing’ is more than one quarter of all the work done by the brain.

We become expert at doing lots of things by practising them over and over again. The more we practise, the more automatic they become and the less we have to think about them when we do them.



Community member Yangkana and teacher Chrissie Perks during a Walmajarri language class at Wulungarra Community School (WA).

If we all learn all the time, what's school for?

We learn how to speak at home, but not usually how to read. Without really knowing how, we learn to ride a bike, but we need to be taught why water runs downhill. We can learn to kick a football or throw a basketball, but you can get better at these activities by being coached.

Just as traditional teaching and learning helped young people to live well in traditional ways, learning at school is designed to help them live well today, to give them the knowledge and skills to make them strong and confident and to give them choices about how they want to live their lives.

At school, young people learn to express, connect and question ideas, and to explain how and why things happen. School also provides students with practice in getting along with people who they wouldn't necessarily meet or spend time with. This is a very important part of being at school.

Taking an interest in what your child is learning is most important

Connecting learning at home and at school

Taking an interest and understanding what your child is learning at school is one of the most important ways to support your child's success at school.

From the earliest years of schooling, students will be encouraged to bring things home from school: paintings, pieces of work, books to read.

As time goes on, they will be asked to do tasks at home. Successful students do homework. The further they get through school, the more necessary this becomes. David, a young Aboriginal student from South Australia who got his Year 12 Certificate said this:

'You've gotta put in the hours. You have to give up a couple of things like I did.'

Older students need to do set homework tasks more regularly, and need to study for tests and exams. You or someone living in the house, might be able to help them. Your school might have a homework centre, or there might be other arrangements out of school hours.

 Ask your child's teachers about homework: what is expected, is it being done and what sort of help might be available.

Facts about learning that are true for everyone

- How you feel about yourself as a learner is very important. If you believe in yourself and work hard, your chances of success increase.
- Encouragement is valuable because it helps you to keep learning. Feedback about what you've done and how well you've done it helps you improve. Feedback is a crucial part of teaching and learning.
- The more you practise learning, the better you get at it. The more you know, the more successful you are likely to be in tackling new and unfamiliar situations.
- When you're learning, what you know beforehand matters. New knowledge (and that includes skills) means more when it is connected with what you know already.
- Learning is more effective when you can see its purpose and value for you.
- The more you concentrate, the better you learn. You can't learn new things if you're thinking about something else, or if you're worried, sick or tired. Your mind is already busy coping with those things. Also, as you get older, you should be able to concentrate for longer times.
- Learning is easier when tasks are clear and structured in small steps. You can succeed consistently, and get hold of something properly before you go on.
- Learning can be helped by
 - providing varied activities;
 - tackling learning task in different ways; and
 - changing activities, especially for young children.



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The Work Program**

This pamphlet is part of the *School and Community: Working Together* series of publications which can be downloaded from www.whatworks.edu.au.

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