

CEM Strategies for Working with Parents as Partners

1. Assistance from CEM can be provided to schools to develop home, school and community partnerships by:

- providing professional learning and development opportunities for faith leaders through study sponsorship, accreditation, and formation activities;
- assisting and advising principals, religious education coordinators and faith development coordinators in all schools to support parents as first educators of faith in the areas of faith formation and religious education;
- providing professional learning activities for school communities in areas such as student safety and wellbeing, religious education;
- providing support for schools to conduct information sessions for parents on Christian education for sexuality;
- supporting all primary schools student wellbeing coordinators who work with parents in enhancing social skills and emotional literacy;
- contributing to the Student Wellbeing Action Partnership (SWAP) website;¹
- providing advice for parents on matters such as bullying, suspension, behaviour management, illness, grief/loss, school policies, child protection, parental access, school processes, disability discrimination, children with additional needs, parent support groups, complaints from parents;
- overseeing the development and delivery of the Parent Seminar Series;²
- participating in program support groups for students with additional needs;
- facilitating agent training for parents on working with their child at home e.g. for speech pathology;
- supporting the management of critical incidents in schools, e.g. death of a student;
- assisting schools and parents to develop a restorative approach to student wellbeing and behaviour management;³
- assisting schools through the *Schools as Core Social Centres* initiative⁴ to develop structures and processes that forge stronger links between schools, families and the community;
- assisting schools to implement drug education programs such as *Talking Tactics Together*⁵ (primary) and *Creating Conversations* (secondary).

2. Information can be provided to parents on services and programs in Catholic schools through:

- the maintenance of Parent and School Board sections of the CEM website www.cem.edu.au
- the Transition to School (K– P) Information Sessions, provided through Specialist Children’s Services, on matters pertaining to transition to Catholic schools for students with additional needs;⁷
- CEM’s publications for parents, e.g. the annual *Director’s Letter to Parents*; the magazine, *Catholic Education Today*, produced quarterly; and *Catholic Schools First Choice: Information Handbook for Parents and Guardians*;⁸
- the general information service available through contact with CEM on matters such as education provision, enrolment procedures, fees and charges, school locations, transition issues, size and type of classes, funding issues, anaphylaxis, health issues.

3. Support for participation of parents in forums at school and system levels can be provided through:

- professional learning activities and consultancy advice for school and college boards;
- advice to parent associations;
- support for Catholic School Parents Victoria;⁹
- parent involvement in school processes such as interview panel for primary principal appointment, building planning and development, financial planning, new school planning and school improvement;
- representation of parents on CEM focus groups and committees.

Endnotes

¹ The SWAP website www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au provides information for parents about websites pertaining to their children's wellbeing.

² Information about the Parent Seminar Series is accessible from the CEM website www.cem.edu.au under Parents.

³ Restorative practices, supported by CEM, facilitates a whole-school approach to promoting resilience and building positive relationships in schools. It places particular emphasis on strategies for restoring relationships.

⁴ The *Schools as Core Social Centres* initiative is a joint CEM and VicHealth project that focuses on the building of school and community partnerships to advance student learning outcomes and parent connectedness with schools and the local community.

⁵ The *Talking Tactics Together* program, a Victorian Government initiative, is an interactive, school-based drug education program that engages parents as partners in their children's learning. It assists schools to provide opportunities for students to talk openly with their families about drug-related issues that are real and relevant to them.

⁶ The *Creating Conversations* program involves Year 9 and 10 students facilitating parent evenings about drug issues using interactive strategies. It is a Victorian Government initiative aimed at enhancing communication between parents and adolescents and strengthening partnerships with local communities.

⁷ For more information about these sessions, parents may contact the Manager, CEM Student Services, Ph 9267 0228.

⁸ Online versions of each of these publications are accessible from the CEM website www.cem.edu.au under *News & Events*.

⁹ For information about Catholic School Parents Victoria, refer their website <http://cspv.catholic.edu.au>.

