



Key features of effective school-community partnerships

Research shows that effective school-community partnerships are typically characterised by a number key features. Any school thinking of applying for a Schools First Award should review the features below in relation to their school-community partnership.

1. An identified need or opportunity

This may be identified by either a school or community organisation. The need should be significant in the sense that addressing it will make a difference in educational outcomes. The need or opportunity is supported by evidence in the form of quantitative and qualitative data.

2. A mission to improve student outcomes

Goals are clear, shared and realistic. They may be short and/or long term. Ultimately, the primary goal is to improve outcomes for students with partners working towards a common interest.

3. Strong and committed leader and leadership team

There is a clear commitment to the partnership at the top level of each partner's organisation.

4. Shared decision-making

Each partner contributes meaningfully to the planning and implementation of the program, in the early stages.

5. Clear roles and responsibilities

There is a management structure and clear processes in place. All stakeholders are represented in the governance structures with each partner having a clearly identified role.

6. A structured and well-organised program

Activities are student-centred, high quality and adequately resourced.

7. Frequent and effective communication

There is a clear communication plan in place and partners are in regular contact. There is a high level of awareness among stakeholders regarding the partnership.

8. Regular monitoring and review

Goals, progress and achievements are regularly monitored and the program is refined as needed.





9. Tangible results

These could include better school attendance, improved academic achievement, increased family and community involvement, and improved school programs. It may be some time before tangible benefits are apparent.

10. Use of data and evidence as a basis for decision-making

Data help schools identify a need or opportunity. Evidence is collected throughout the program, via such means as surveys, interviews, analyses of attendance and test data.

11. Sustainability

These partnerships need to be sufficiently resourced and integrated into the culture of the partner organisations to ensure sustainability.

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