

Guiding Beliefs

Everyone has their own beliefs about teacher effectiveness and what are the most important factors for children's achievements in education. However, there is a growing understanding that when parents, children, and school staff work together, there are more opportunities for children's learning to improve. Communities can only come to that consensus through listening and sharing what each has to offer. In many instances, information seems to go between parents and children and teachers and children or from teachers to parents. For a true partnership, there needs to be communication and shared understandings between the three parties. It is important for parents to learn about the mathematics taught in the classroom, but it is equally important for teachers to know about children's mathematical experiences at home.

Children can become frustrated if their parents "don't seem to know how to work out a problem the way they do it at school"; that is quite understandable as the Numeracy Development Projects only began in 2000. Since then, there have been many changes to the ways teachers are teaching mathematics, in particular, number. Teachers are encouraged, for example, to move away from their formal style of teaching and to tap into children's thinking, asking questions such as "How did you get that answer?" or "Can you think of another way of doing it?" Children are encouraged to talk among themselves about the mathematics, to share their ideas, and to generalise their understandings.

Just as children share their understandings with other children and teachers, they also need to share them with their parents. At times, parents may like some help and support to understand the mathematics that children are being taught. Home-School Partnership: Numeracy gives parents access to both knowledge and information through participation in activities similar to those that their children do in school. As parents in turn share their experiences of everyday mathematics, the idea that "school maths" and "home maths" are separate should change. This will have a positive impact on children's views and attitudes towards mathematics.

Researchers and educators believe that building home-community and home-school partnership is fundamental to effective teaching¹ and that families need to be involved as much as possible. Building harmonious relationships between school, families, and communities can have reciprocal benefits for all concerned. Parents develop more understanding of the school's programme and appreciate their children's numeracy knowledge, while home and community environments offer a rich source of numeracy experiences on which to base and enhance that learning in school.

¹G. Anthony, and M. Walshaw (2007). *Effective Pedagogy in Mathematics/Pāngarau: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration [BES]*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Home–School Partnership: Numeracy is a way to bring a community together. It can:

- reinforce and endorse what families and parents are already doing for their children;
- increase parents’ and families’ understanding of numeracy and the practical ways to help children learn;
- provide opportunities to share ways in which families and teachers working together can further enhance children’s numeracy development;
- help to establish a caring working partnership.

The aim of Home–School Partnership: Numeracy is to improve student achievement by having teams of parents and teachers working closely together to deliver numeracy sessions for parents, caregivers, and whānau.

The teachers and parents leading the Home–School Partnership: Numeracy sessions will:

- plan the community sessions;
- encourage parents to participate;
- help parents recognise their importance as “parents as first teachers”;
- encourage ways in which parents can help their children in numeracy;
- signal the importance of high expectations and a positive attitude towards numeracy;
- gain more confidence in working with a group of parents;
- encourage all school staff to participate in the sessions.