

**MEMORANDUM TO
SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
SCHOOL EDUCATION DIRECTORS
REGIONAL DIRECTORS
STATE OFFICE DIRECTORS**

DN 09/00306

SCHOOLS AND THEIR PARENTS AND CITIZENS' ASSOCIATIONS

Dear Colleagues

Public education draws its strength from partnerships based on mutual respect, shared goals and trust. One of those most fundamental partnerships is between parents and their child's teacher. Student learning improves when parents and staff work together in the best interests of the child.

The organised voice of parents – the school's Parents and Citizens' Association, universally known as "the P&C" – can provide a supportive platform for developing partnerships in the school community.

We encourage parents of public school students to join the P&C at the school their children attend. The effectiveness of the school's P&C relates directly to the extent to which its membership reflects the composition of the school community, and the extent to which parents participate in the life of the school.

In turn, schools will be most effective in meeting their goals when the partnership between parents and staff is open, publicly valued and based on a clear understanding of respective roles and responsibilities, the main aspects of which are outlined in legislation, department policy and the P&C Handbook. NSW public school principals have a fine record of leadership in this area.

Principals' key responsibilities in their school centre on the learning achieved by students. To this end, principals lead the development of the school plan and, in consultation with the school community, are responsible for articulating priorities, strategies, targets and allocation of resources within the school.

Principals also have responsibility for the staff and student body and financial management. The P&C Association is informed on a regular basis of the school's financial management and principals are required to inform, consult and seek advice in relation to school financial priorities. Sharing planning and financial information also allows constructive dialogue on how funds raised and donated by the P&C might be allocated.

The key focus of the P&C is to provide a forum in which parents can articulate their needs and aspirations for their children and contribute to a developing partnership with the school. As part of their support for public education, representatives of individual school P&Cs are encouraged to participate at a regional and state level to further improve partnerships in our system.

P&C meetings are an excellent opportunity for school staff and members of the parent community to work together. These meetings provide an open and inclusive forum where members meet to share ideas and concerns, build shared understanding of key issues, jointly agree on goals, and collaborate on a range of projects. The principal has a significant role in P&C meetings, ensuring members are well informed about school and wider educational matters. The meeting is also an opportunity for principals to become better informed about parent opinion on such matters. Consequently, the principal is an ex-officio member of the school's P&C Association. The principal is eligible to vote but cannot veto motions or decisions.

I'd appreciate it if principals ensured that this memorandum was discussed with their parent community and their staff. I'm keen to ensure that the value we place on parent partnerships in our schools across NSW is well known and that schools actively work on building and nurturing these partnerships.

With my best regards,

Michael Coutts-Trotter
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF TAFE NSW

30 August 2009