

Information Sheet No.11

Valuing your community

The P&C Association is a feature of all public schools in the ACT. Schools benefit from the support of their P&Cs. Besides creating opportunities for the school community to interact socially, the P&C provides an important forum to discuss and debate school issues. How parents become involved in the education of their children will depend on what suits the family.

Being involved in the P&C can have several advantages:

- meeting the parents of your children's friends
- getting to know the teachers better
- understanding more about what happens at school
- acquiring new skills
- demonstrating a positive attitude to schooling to your child.

How can you encourage parents to become involved in the P&C association? There should be an ongoing process of encouraging members to be actively involved in their association. If parents are reluctant to become involved, find out why. Members should be a vital part of the organisation - decisions should not be left to just a few.

Many P&Cs have varied their past routines and have attracted increased numbers. Some of the following ideas have been successfully tried:

- introducing daytime meetings
- providing childcare
- allowing for social interaction
- running meetings well
- having separate executive and general meetings
- presenting pertinent topics
- ensuring parents know what is being discussed.

Many P&C associations are now able to communicate using a designated page on the school website. Some P&Cs have even set up their own websites. This recognizes the "time-poor" nature of many parents, by providing information which can be accessed at any time.

We realise that not everyone has the time or interest to come to P&C meetings. Remember the very good levels of co-operation which exist in our schools between parents and teachers. Parents support their children's school in many ways and these must be recognised and valued. They include:

- helping in the canteen or with library work
- assisting with classroom activities
- raising individual matters of concern such as playground safety, canteen nutrition, etc
- offering to carry out maintenance for school equipment
- providing expertise in particular areas and so on
- Serving as parent representatives on school boards.

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Valuing your community (continued)

Participation in P&Cs must always be seen as an invitation, not as an obligation. Parents, as well as having the right to volunteer, also have the right not to. Acknowledge the fact that all parents have an interest in their children's education and continue to encourage them to take part in a variety of school activities. The more comfortable and confident parents feel in the school environment, the more likely they are to contribute to their children's learning experiences. ★