

# School Stories

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## School-family-community partnerships - Example 2

### Brief background to school initiative

This school identified a need to increase parent involvement in behaviour modification strategies.

### School profile

- Metropolitan government school
- 781 students
- Years: F - 6.

### Action

The school engaged in strategies that did not at first appear to address bullying, however, over time, came together to reduce and prevent bullying. The steps used to promote anti-bullying messages, strategies and activities at the school were:

1. Establish and consistently apply a behaviour management policy.
2. Have staff ratify and review the 'Behaviour Management in Schools' policy.
3. Ensure that parents are contacted in cases of student absenteeism. Non-supported absenteeism was reported to welfare.
4. Record incidents on a computer database to facilitate immediate follow-up.
5. Gradually encourage parent support (they were originally aggressive).
6. Provide useful hints for parents in newsletters.
7. Include a hard-core group of children in the 'Exploring Together' program.
8. Invite offending children and their parents to a 10-week course, run by four facilitators (two for parents, two for the children). Parents and children met separately for one hour then regrouped for the last half-hour.



The Exploring Together program provided students with frameworks for social interaction and problem solving to resolve issues and conflict without violence. Problem solving skills were taught to students so that they were able to deal with incidents themselves. The program taught students to look at how other people felt and choose a win-win solution.

The Exploring Together program aimed to build better relationships between parents and children. Two courses were run per year (in Term 2 and Term 3). Up to eight students per course could attend. The resources and facilitators for this program were provided by Perth City Mission. The program targeted students who were involved in repeated incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Students were identified by classroom teachers and through computer database records of inappropriate behaviour. The program involved the students, their parents and teachers and focused on the development of social skills, parenting practices and the strengthening of family units. There was a student group, a parent group and meetings for partners and teachers. In promoting positive social relations, the school believed that consistency, role modelling, interaction with parents and the belief that things could be improved were essential.

To achieve cooperation between parent groups and school staff regarding behaviour management, the school believed that stability of staffing, communication and staff role modelling for parents were essential. Communication occurred through a formalised procedure of follow-up with parents after incidents, through newsletter articles (social skills snippets) and casual discussion in the schoolyard. Students were encouraged to share what they learnt at school with their parents. The school recently built a new playground for junior students. This initiative was partially funded by the local shire. The parent body helped to raise additional funds and to build the actual playground. This new playground has provided the junior students with constructive play opportunities. Furthermore, it has provided them with a separate play area from the older students, and thus has reduced the potential for bullying.

## What we learnt

### Difficulties encountered

At the start of the program, parents were resistant to the Exploring Together program as they did not see behaviour problems with their children at home. Many parents did not understand that children sometimes behaved differently at home from at school

### Overcoming difficulties

Meetings held with the parents to discuss the problems and the program allowed parents to understand the program before they joined up. It was also found that after the first program was run, the response from parents was positive and through word-of-mouth others wanted to join.