

## Why is the engagement of families important in the promotion of children's learning?

A child-friendly school is a family friendly school. It builds relationships with parents and caregivers who have primary responsibility for the well-being of children at all stages of their development. An informed, caring family can be the most stable agent for learning, so the engagement of families in the promotion and strengthening of children's learning can be among the most effective and lasting interventions. This is particularly critical in the case of families made vulnerable by poverty, disease, conflict, lack of water, fuel or other resources, or by domestic violence; in families in isolated communities not reached by limited government services; and in ethnically marginalized or excluded families

Parents who feel positive about school and are involved in its life are likely to be the best advocates for the school's values, policies and practices at home, whether by encouraging homework, promoting anti-harassment or supporting cooperation with others. Where there is no contact between home and school, problems in the child's life may go unrecognized by the school and will not be properly addressed. Even in underprivileged families, high levels of parental support and a positive school climate foster self-confidence and self-esteem.

Families and caregivers have particular roles to play in preparing their children for a child-friendly school and supporting and providing guidance to the school.

In a child-friendly school:

- Parents and households have regular, meaningful two-way communication with the school;
- Parents have an integral role in assisting school learning;
- Parents are full partners in decision making about education outcomes for their children;
- Parents are welcome in the school and their support for children's learning is sought.

Often families and households do not feel empowered to take on these roles, nor are schools prepared to support them. Therefore, it is important to involve families in their children's education and establish community school.

Families are children's first teachers and have a critical role to play in preparing them for school. Parenting styles and the number of resources available for children will either help young children develop the skills, attitudes and behaviours required to flourish in a school community or thwart their abilities to actively participate.

An effective way to prepare parents and caregivers to nurture school-family connections is for communities to develop and organize early childhood centres. Through their involvement, parents begin to understand how to manage a centre and participate in the centre's decision-making. In such community-based centres, families learn essential skills and their attitudes change as they see first hand how their participation can make a

difference. The early childhood centres are not only important in readying young children for school, but also in preparing families, particularly women, for their role with schools.