

# Innovative parent engagement leadership practices across diverse school contexts

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Dr Jenny Povey [j.povey@uq.edu.au](mailto:j.povey@uq.edu.au)

Dr Linda-Dianne Willis [l.willis@uq.edu.au](mailto:l.willis@uq.edu.au)

Dr Julie Hodges [j.hodges@psy.uq.edu.au](mailto:j.hodges@psy.uq.edu.au)



# Background

- ❖ Principals play a key role in parent-school-community engagement
- ❖ Research on principal leadership for parent engagement is rare
- ❖ Research on principal leadership for parent engagement in educationally-disadvantaged schools is even rarer
- ❖ PES project in 2014 which investigated principal leadership using survey research of principals and P&C presidents in Queensland found an apparent contradiction: high levels of parent-engagement in some educationally-disadvantaged schools

# Research Question

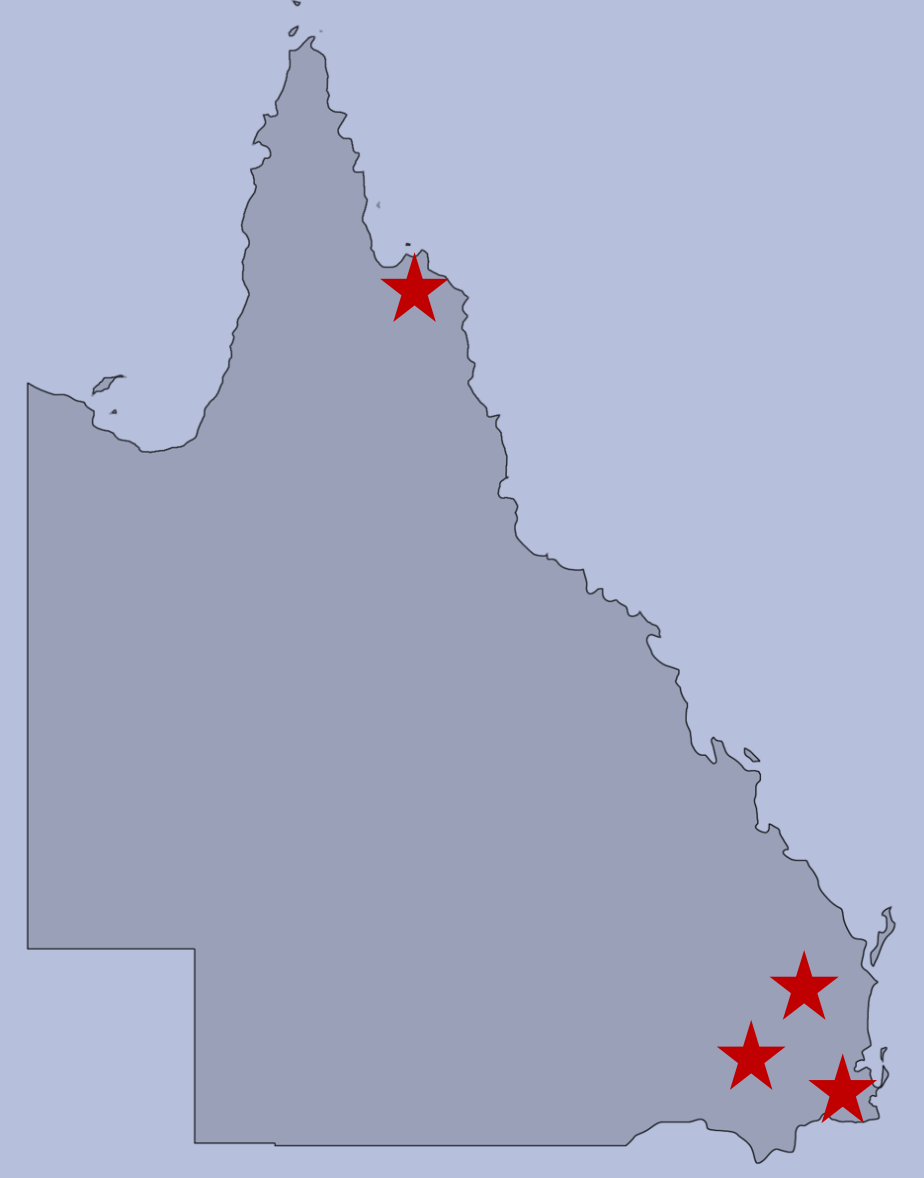
What gives some principals in educationally-disadvantaged schools the edge on parent engagement?



# Methodology

- ❖ Design-based research in 2016-2017 focused on principal leadership in 4 schools (3 to date) to explore strategies and practices
- ❖ Data sources:
  - ❖ quantitative - surveys (teachers and parents)
  - ❖ qualitative - interviews (principals) & focus groups (teachers, parents and students)
- ❖ Each school serviced disparate parent and student populations





**School 1 - Ipswich.** Small-medium school. High ESL

- Principal leadership practices that promote parent engagement
- School seen as a hub of the community
- Teaching staff provided with internal training in how to effectively work with parents

**School 2 - Gold Coast.** Medium-large school.

- Principal leadership practices that promote parent engagement
- School has a list of parents always willing to help
- School is seen as a hub of the community
- Principal has strong relationships with parents
- Teaching staff provided with internal training in how to effectively work with parents

**School 3 - Southern Downs.** Small-medium school. Large Indigenous population.

- Principal leadership practices that promote parent engagement
- School seen as a hub of the community
- Principal has strong relationships with parents
- Teaching staff provided with internal training in how to effectively work with parents



# Schwab's Framework

- ❖ Students
- ❖ Teachers
- ❖ Curriculum
- ❖ Milieus
  - ❖ Schools
  - ❖ Classrooms
  - ❖ Parents
  - ❖ Local community
  - ❖ Technology



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Principal leadership for parent-  
school-community engagement







# Principal Prattle

## Innovative Strategies

After the parade on the Monday she generally comes into the library and talks about programs they're doing at school: whether it's school-wide prep for NAPLAN or anti-bullying program that the teachers are going through or various things like that.

It changes depending on whether she wants ideas for the next disco night or something that the P&C's working on.

It's kind of like a little informal staff meeting, but for parents, to know what's going on. [Teacher]





# Vision Values Voting

A survey was distributed to all parents



Invitation was sent out to attend a School and Community Meeting



Consultation was sought on 12 key areas and attendees grouped these in terms of most to least important.



Through this process the community indicated the school's key priority areas



## School Song

We have the school song. So that came about by having Josh Arnold come to our school and do a song, and the kids wrote the song, they performed the song, and it's up on YouTube.

At a parade every morning, we sing along to all our school song. At the very beginning of the year for the new parents, the Principal would get some of the parents who had been here for a while, to sing the school song to the new parents so they know what's going on. [Parent]



# Koala Joeys

## Innovative Strategies

It's a zero to five transition program and it's as much an education for parents as well as the children: it's based on early literacy, early numeracy skills. We look at nursery rhymes, movement, singing and dancing, and the parents do that with the children.

While the program's underway we get to feed in lots of information about what are good skills for early literacy and numeracy with the parents. We also fit in information about recent brain research and how it's important to be doing these sorts of activities with the littlies. [Teacher]



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# Transitions

At the end of term four, it's the day when the prep parents bring their children to meet the teacher and they have a day with their new teacher. So while the new little preppies are in with their teachers we take the parents off down to the hall. So all the new parents there come down and I organise for different community members to come in and speak, and these are usually people I've met through that Early Years Network.  
[Principal]



# Parent Literacy Coaching

We run a workshop on teaching reading at home which is a shared approach so that parents can see, *“Okay, why am I doing sight words at home? Oh, because in the classroom they get used for incidental teaching and learning, but the children also get assessed on them and it helps them progress through their reading much, much quicker.”*

It was all about: *“What does this look like in the classroom? What can this look like at home?”*

I gave them all the printout of the PowerPoint so they could annotate notes and we did a feedback session at the end and used that to drive our next approach. [Teacher]





## 3 metre rule

The three metre rule is if you see a parent within three metres of you, you say *“Hello. Good morning. How are you?”* and then you say, *“Do you need any help?”*

That’s the three metre rule to make sure that they’re not ignored and also just to keep it on the safe side as well. [Teacher]



# Challenges

The common challenges for parent engagement across the three schools were:

- ❖ Parent literacy
- ❖ Previous negative experiences
- ❖ Cultural beliefs
- ❖ Parents working inflexible or long work hours
- ❖ Lack of conflict resolution strategies

