

Case study | Engaging Families and Increasing Social Networks

Teacher's Helper Afternoon Tea

This case study is about the Teacher's Helper Afternoon Tea sessions, provided at Blacktown North Public School Hub, which has a focus on engaging families to become more involved in school life, meet other families and broaden their social support networks.

What was the challenge?

Parents were surprised to hear how much work teachers take home each day and how much effort goes into readying resources for class each day. The Teacher's Helper Afternoon Tea was designed to help relieve this extra pressure from teachers, as well as supply families with an avenue to become more involved in school life, meet other families and broaden social support networks.

What worked? What didn't?

Parents and families of the school are invited to attend the Community Hub any time between 2pm and 4pm on Tuesday afternoons to help readying resources for the teachers to use in class. Children are very welcome and there is a craft table set up to keep them occupied, while the parents (predominately mother's) enjoyed an afternoon tea and chat with other parents, while covering books, sharpening pencils or making other resources.

Teachers are invited to come along for a few moments to introduce themselves to the families and have a brief chat. Through these interactions, parents have they were surprised by how easy it was to speak with a teacher and have indicated that in the future, they would feel more confident seeking out their child's teacher playground to ask questions.

A social approach is highly important, with parents encouraged to come and go as they need, bring their children along, and talk with each other as much as they wish during the afternoon. Many families have made solid connections, which has led to establishing stronger support networks for our families.

Parents take great pride in the work they are doing. Children in classes also feel great pride in being able to inform their class mates that is was their mother or their Aunty that covered the books this week. Students work in their class time to compose thank you letters to send back to the afternoon tea and parents love taking home a copy of these letters of appreciation.

"I feel like we are doing valuable, important work. Teachers can concentrate on what is important – our children."
Parent from

Your advice?

Keep the session informal and flexible, with tea, coffee, food, and lots of chat encouraged. Have a lot of hands on work available as people talk more when busy and sharing an activity is a great ice breaker. Teacher involvement is important to encourage and validate ongoing volunteers and encourage families to share their valuable ideas.

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