



Family Ties



By Deirdre Kinsella Biss

Editor, *Principal Connections*

With the release of the latest issue of **Principal Connections**, Editor Deirdre Kinsella Biss provides a sneak preview of what you can expect in our magazine this month.

The “family” is truly our first place of learning. Our parents and guardians are our first teachers. They teach us about love and kindness, they develop our faith, they instil our values and guide our formation. Families are our personal centre. They are made from the heart. They come in all shapes and sizes, they are there to support us and help us grow.

Parent engagement in our Catholic schools is fundamental to who we are as a community. Parents who authentically take part in their child’s learning give their children the gift and appreciation of life-long learning. This issue of *Principal Connections* will explore and celebrate the significant role “family” plays in education, in living and in learning.

We begin with an article entitled *The Getting of Wisdom*. Australian theologian Jill Gowdie inspires us with her reflections on the Holy Family. She draws parallels between the demands of modern day family life and the daily challenges faced by the Holy Family. She moves our attention to the responsibilities and the messiness that go with being part of a family. Jill humbly reminds us that many of the same issues we struggle with, the Holy Family also encountered. She calls us back to our Catholic roots and reminds us that we are all about developing the very being of our students – and we are doing it with a view that is life-wide, life-deep and life-long.

Ken Leithwood highlights how family involvement impacts student achievement in his article *Alterable Conditions in the Home Contributing to Student’s Success at School*. The Theory of Action provides pathways to school improvement and Ken identifies the Family Path as a significant route to improved learning and well-being. He highlights three conditions that promote equity and enhance parent engagement and student success. His research suggests that parent expectation, parent social capital and effective forms of school-related communication between students and parents make a difference.

Helen DeWaard and Dr. Debbie Donsky have created a special Family Communication Infographic for this edition. In this infographic, *Engaging Parents with Communication Pathways*, principals and vice-principals have “at a glance” access to digital resources that are designed to improve school related communication. When communication is clear, parents are empowered to engage and participate.

We also hear from school leaders, colleagues who share their experience, thoughts and insights. Principal Brian Diogo highlights the importance of confidence, collaboration, contribution and celebration in his article *The Four Cs to Building*

Effective School-Parent Relationships. Principal Michael MacPherson talks about the foundational role of trust when working with parents. Principal Janice Bazaluk shares important ways and strategies to welcome and work with parents in northern schools. Principal Daniel Stargratt shares his story about the success he has experienced using a strength based approach to working with parents.

The articles shared in this publication provide different perspectives and ideas about working in partnership with parents. We all come to the table with different stories and traditions, not all families are created equal. But families care and want the best for their children and are a huge part of our students lives. Families make society a better place to live.

During this month of December, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus into his own Holy Family, let us embrace the families we serve in our Catholic communities and find ways to welcome and work with all of them. May we wish you, and all your families, a blessed Christmas.



The above article was featured in **The Family Path** issue of CPCO's *Principal Connections* magazine.

If you would like to read the whole issue, you can purchase it [here](#).

CPCO Practising Associates can read the issue by logging in [here](#).