Working Towards Parent Engagement In Education

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Introduction
This project was developed in response to research that highlighted the evidence of the importance of parent engagement and the detrimental effects that an absence of parental engagement (for whatever reasons) had on children and young people’s educational achievement (see for example Lea et al 2011; Mo & Singh 2008; Berthelsen & Walker 2008).

Aim
In this study we explored how Indigenous parent engagement in their children’s education might be promoted. What we were particularly concerned to avoid was the more typical approach of describing and advocating a particular strategy, one that then may or may not be applicable in other contexts. Therefore, we focused on drawing out of our investigations the overriding principles and conditions for successful engagement in this particular context, making these principles and conditions become more easily transferable to other contexts.

Methodology
Site
Two schools were included in the Study, chosen from a larger group by The Smith Family (TSF) on the basis that they were representative of schools involved in the Parent Engagement Project.

Participants
The study focused specifically on three groups of people:
1. Parents who attended the Parent Engagement Project,
2. School staff involved with the Parent Engagement Project, from each school, these included; the Principal; the Family Centre Coordinators; and a staff member who taught the children of a parent involved in the program,
3. The Smith Family staff who were directly involved in the implementation of the Parent Engagement Project in schools.

Method
A critical ethnographic approach (Tamboukou and Ball 2003; Youdell 2006) to data collection was used for the study. This involved the use of observations, interviews and digital story production (Rossetter and Garcia 2010; Walsh et al 2011) over a period of three months and involving five to seven visits to schools during this time. All these aspects of conducting the study allowed us to generate a rich set data that was effective in allowing us to explore the principles and conditions at work in the parent/TSF/school contexts.

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References