

## Teacher-Parent Partnerships in the Post-Covid Context

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It is without question that children whose home environment is supportive of their school learning experience an academic advantage. Muir (2011) writes that parents are influential in whether or not their children experience success in mathematics and Wadham et al. (2022) argue that “schools and families should work collaboratively to achieve shared goals for children’s mathematics learning” (p. 679). Despite evidence to indicate the value of parental involvement, in pre-Covid South Africa it was found that very few teachers assigned homework (Graven, 2018). Some reasons included that parents were perceived as being unable to support the homework, or would do the homework themselves (Graven, 2018). Darragh and Franke (2022) also report that pre-pandemic research revealed that “mathematics homework is often unsuccessful or stressful for both parents and children” (p. 1521). In contrast, our research conducted during Covid-19 showed that teachers recognised the critical importance of engaging with parents and many reported very positive experiences of doing so (Vale & Graven, 2022; 2023).

In this research, we ask: How are mathematics teachers engaging with parents in the post-Covid context? Early grade (Grades R, 1 and 2) mathematics teachers (38) completed a questionnaire that probed for responses about how they are engaging with parents and the practice of giving homework in the post-Covid context. The results indicate that most are continuing to engage with parents (32/38), saying “we now have a common understanding of the importance of working together” (W, Q2) and “parents started to engage with their children which is a golden reward for us” (AC, Q2). It is concerning however, that there is evidence of a strand of narrative re-emerging that is indicative of difficulties: “[homework] is a no go at public schools” and “it has changed...parents no longer show interest” (Z, Q2). We need to learn from the data how to assist teachers in continuing to reach families. We learn of some successful measures, like the teacher who has “facilitated workshops with parents to equip them with materials that will assist at home” (C, Q3) and several who “used WhatsApp to explain how to ‘teach’” (J, Q5). In contexts where the “community is very illiterate and poor” (X, Q5), this is clearly challenging, but we learn much from this data about how to productively move forward in encouraging teacher-parent partnerships.

### References

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