

## ***Section 2: Planning and Preparation***

Once the lead team has been selected and roles have been delegated, decisions have to be made about training lead parents, possible ways of delivering the community sessions, and how many sessions to have. It is entirely up to your school and the community, although at least three sessions are recommended, with four–six sessions most common.

There are a number of questions that need to be asked. Some possible questions and answers are provided below, but the real answers lie with your school and your community.

### **Time for planning sessions**

*How long is a planning session and what does it involve?*

The planning sessions (for the lead teacher and lead parents) can be for a morning or a full school day. That means there needs to be release time for the lead teacher. Usually, two community sessions can be planned in a day. If an outside facilitator is available, the planning time may be shorter. Generally, the planning session is held one week and the community sessions in the following two weeks. Remember that some parents may have to take time off work. A sacrifice like that should be valued in some way. Food, koha, or petrol vouchers are always useful.

### **Time of day for community sessions**

*What part of the day?*

Whichever time you choose, there will always be some groups of parents that miss out. Holding sessions during school time is ideal for catching parents who are either dropping off children or picking them up, although it does mean that working parents cannot attend. If you have the sessions in the evening, childcare issues and providing a meal may need to be considered. Some schools provide childcare or involve children in the sessions at night to cater for this. Some schools hold two or three community sessions in a day, which can be both satisfying and tiring. Whatever time you choose, start and finish on time.

### **Duration**

*How long?*

One to one-and-a-half hours is the recommended duration. If the session lasts for too long, parents may not be keen to come back. If children are attending, 1 hour is usually long enough.

## **Number of sessions**

*How many?*

Four to six is recommended, but the number is entirely at the discretion of the school. If your meetings are to be close together, more than six meetings would be a considerable commitment for all involved.

## **Suitable dates**

*What time of the year best suits your school?*

Consider the regularity of sessions: fortnightly in one term or once or twice a term. A longer duration may make it difficult to maintain a consistent team of parents. Check for community events outside the school and special occasions, for example, Halloween seems to be becoming more popular, with both children and parents involved in the evening's activities. Preparing for White Sunday, Chinese New Year, or Matariki celebrations are some of the others.

## **Clusters**

*Will you work within your school or cluster with another one?*

A cluster may suit some smaller schools. If you are in a cluster, then meeting times for planning workshops and community sessions need to be set early and adhered to.

## **Knowing your audience**

*How will you support parents who speak languages other than English during the shared part of the sessions?*

Use the languages from your group where appropriate, for example, during counting games. You may consider involving their children as translators or utilising the language skills of your lead parents. Encourage parents to play the games and activities at home in their first languages.

## **Child care**

*What will happen with the children when you are working with parents?*

Who will be responsible? Consider the possibility of providing childcare at school for both planning and community sessions or just for the planning sessions. You might like to have children involved in activities or provide alternative areas such as a crèche or an activity-based area.

## **Catering**

*What will you offer parents? Who will provide this?*

Food has been identified as one of the most important aspects of any Home–School Partnership: Numeracy session. Not only are you showing that you value the people coming, you acknowledge them culturally as well as showing common courtesy. It is thoughtful to provide food for the family at the evening sessions, as it saves cooking meals when they return home. Sausage sizzles, fish and chips, pizzas, or finger food are popular, but keep in mind there may be other particular dietary requirements such as diabetic, halal, or vegetarian.

## **Invitations**

*How will you get parents along? By invitation or by advertising?*

Some suggestions:

- child-created invitations personalised to their parents
- invitations in different languages
- word of mouth: lead parents contact their community
- tickets: children take them home, and parents who come to the meetings put their tickets into a prize draw
- displays in the school hall
- banners outside the school gate
- newsletters with photographs and parents' feedback on the value of Home–School Partnership: Numeracy from an earlier session
- paper bracelets around children's wrists to take home as a reminder to parents
- foyer display
- local newspaper
- pamphlets given out at the front gate
- telephone tree
- local radio
- parish priest
- raffle prizes displayed before the session day
- shoulder tapping at the gate
- showing raffle prizes to children at assembly
- food as an incentive, for example, offer breakfast

- written invitations on a key: “You are the key to your child’s future” or “Unlock the key to your child’s future”
- home visits or individual contact with some parents by teacher, principal, or lead parents.

## **Equipment**

*What will you need to bring to each community session?*

Pretend you are going on camp. It is no different except that it is easier. You need to be prepared and treat each session as if you are “going bush” and cannot just “pop back” if you forget things.

## **Take-home packs**

*What will be in them? Who will organise this?*

Some suggestions for contents:

- games the parents have played that night
- cards
- dice
- counters
- written resources/ideas.

## **Making games**

*Are you going to have parents making a game in a particular session?*

If so, you will need to supply equipment such as the masters on card, scissors, felts, laminating pockets, and laminators.

## **Sponsorship**

*Will the school seek this? If so, who will be responsible?*

If your school is lucky enough to be sponsored, think about how the sponsors will be acknowledged in your community sessions.

## **Seating and tables**

*Will you need tables? What seats do you need?*

Try to avoid using junior seats. There is nothing more embarrassing for parents than trying to fit large frames onto very small chairs. If you can't find enough chairs of a reasonable size, it may be a good idea to borrow some plastic picnic chairs.

## **Planning for extra community participants**

*Who is invited? Extended whānau? Parents of pre-schoolers in the area?*

Don't be disheartened if you have only a few parents at a session. Even one parent is more than you had before. However, consider the dilemma you may be in if you plan for 20, and 200 turn up. It has happened. So there needs to be more than one plan. You may need to change your venue in a hurry, know where to find spare chairs, have someone ring the local fish and chip shop or pizza place, know which classrooms have the equipment you need quickly, and have some spare games up your sleeve that will involve a lot of people. It calls for flexibility and creativity.

## **Culture**

*What cultural information will you need to have?*

- For each cultural group within your school community, you will need to take time to get to know them and their needs. The questions below may help.
- What is an appropriate way of communicating during these sessions? (For example, greetings, blessing of food, thanking, or farewelling)
- Are there any particular food requirements?
- Are there any protocols relating to how and/or where they sit?
- Are there any specific protocols relating to their personal needs?

## **Teachers**

*How will they be involved?*

You need to discuss how staff members are to be involved in the Home–School Partnership: Numeracy sessions – as learners or teachers. To begin with, it needs to be decided what sort of partnership it is. Usually, there is a period of time when parents are doing the learning, but as people get to know each other and closer relationships develop, there is a see-saw effect the other way and the teachers become the learners. When they start to benefit from each other, then the true Home–School Partnership: Numeracy evolves.

## **Transport**

*How will people get to the community sessions?*

Not everyone has ready transport. Organising transport involves knowing your community. As well, some people may be very shy, so make sure they do not arrive on their own. Buddy up people and arrange it so that everyone who wants to come is able to.

## Venue

*Where will you hold your community sessions? How will the venue look?*

Decide which area you will use. An ideal one would be a multi-purpose room that can be closed off for smaller numbers and opened up for larger numbers. Ensure that the room is set up in the way you want the group to work. You might have seminar-type seating in the centre for key mathematical messages and themes, with tables and chairs set up elsewhere for group work. Seating must be appropriate for adults of all sizes: teachers may be used to sitting in junior chairs, but many adults are not.

Setting up an environment must reflect respect for the community. For example, if you have a mainly Pasifika community, then you may consider playing Pasifika music and incorporate the use of lei, tapa, flowers, and music. If people can recognise aspects they are familiar with, they will immediately feel more comfortable.

Ideas for displays:

- children's numeracy-related art



- school mathematics equipment
- materials for sale for under three dollars and how they could be used
- library books with a maths context
- mathematics games
- key points and photos displayed from previous sessions

- posters in different languages
- displays of Number Framework stages
- displays of strategies on a “washing line”
- if possible, display in parents’ first language key messages such as:  
 helping your child to learn; understanding numeracy: starting to learn;  
 understanding numeracy: understanding the learning;  
 understanding numeracy: maintaining the learning.

## **Multimedia**

*What technological equipment do you need?*

It is important that all equipment is working and is appropriate to the audience. If overhead transparencies are being used, can the colour and size be seen from the back of the room? Remember to avoid yellow in any headings of posters or banners. Check that there are adequate speakers if sound is required. If the school has sophisticated technology, ensure the lead team know how to use it correctly, for example, data projectors or interactive whiteboards.

## **Data**

*Do you need to gather data for reporting to your board of trustees?*

Teachers gather and analyse data on students’ attainment so that they can be responsive to the students’ needs and plan for more effective learning. Gathering evidence from community sessions also helps show where the schools and community could strengthen their relationship and contribute to students’ achievements. Suggestions and formats can be found on the nzmaths website ([www.nzmaths.co.nz](http://www.nzmaths.co.nz)).

## **Check-up before community sessions**

*Does every person in the lead team know what they need to do?*

About two or three days before each community session starts, check that all people clearly understand their role in delivering the community sessions. Someone has to assume this responsibility; everyone needs to know who is doing the check.

Questions may include:

- Who is to do the welcome?
- Are you ready for the session?
- Do you have any problems that need to be solved?
- Are you prepared for a larger number than expected?
- Do you require support from other members of the community?
- Are the take-home packs completed?
- Is the food organised?
- Are the materials ready for displays that help set the scene?
- Has the relevant equipment been checked?
- Who is organising raffles or spot prizes if you intend to have them?
- What will be available for the children if they are being cared for in school?
- Is someone available to help with a boisterous or unhappy baby or toddler?
- Who will be around to help pack up at the end of the session?
- Are there containers or suitable wrapping if there is leftover food?
- Who is going to turn off the lights and lock up?

## **Greeting the community**

*How will you greet the community as they arrive?*

*For example, by:*

- the principal or board of trustees chairperson meeting parents at the door;
- lead teachers and lead parents personally welcoming parents as they arrive;
- someone writing names on tickets for a prize draw;
- offering food or a hot or cold drink.