



# Annual symposium highlights powerful role parents can play in student outcomes



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Parents were in the spotlight this year at the Supreme Education Council’s Annual Symposium. More than 800 people, most of them parents and educators, attended the symposium, “Parents: Partners in Education,” hearing from a leading Qatari and international expert, while also having the chance to see firsthand the amazing work being done by Qatar’s students at a special exhibition.

“I now know more concrete ways that I can become involved in the education of my sons and daughters,” said [parent]. “While much of what they are learning is new to me, if I find ways to better work with their teachers and the school, I know I can make a difference.”

Dr. Heather Weiss, the Founder and Director of the Harvard Family Research Project delivered the symposium’s keynote address. She shared her compelling research on the powerful impact parents can have on improving

the children’s educational success. Her research showed that children with involved parents earned better grades, attended school more regularly and pursued post secondary education at a higher rate.

Dr. Weiss made a direct appeal to parents to be more involved in a variety of ways, from reading with their children to volunteering in the schools or serving on the Board of Trustees. Dr. Weiss also stressed the importance of teachers and administrators finding ways to engage parents and make it

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easier for them to be involved in their children’s education.

“Parental involvement is not a one-way street. To be truly effective, a national parental policy and plan should be developed that has input from parents, teachers, administrators and the community as a whole,” Dr. Weiss said during her remarks. “I hope that this symposium is just the start of a dialogue that will continue and result in action and important change to help Qatar’s impressive education reform.”

Dr. Weiss answered questions from parents and teachers for a full hour following her presentation. Questions ranged from how teachers could make the classroom more inviting to parents, to how to make parent-teacher conferences more productive, to how divorced parents can work together to help their children.

“It’s so important for both teachers and

parents to hear and better understand the true impact parental involvement can have on a child’s life,” said Hala Al Osaimi, an Arabic teacher at Al Resala Independent Secondary School for Girls. “As teachers, we need to find ways to allow parents to be involved in the classroom and engaged in school work at home with their children.”

The Secretary General of the Supreme Education Council, Her Excellency Sheikha Ahmed Al Mahmoud set the tone for the symposium in her remarks, saying that parents are the most important element of society and serve as the first teachers in a child’s life. HE Sheikha Al Mahmoud also inaugurated the exhibition of works from the independent schools. All 73 independent schools contributed work to the exhibition, including science projects, paintings, pottery and examples of innovative lessons. Mr. Aylan Al Enazi, a member of the board of trustees (BOT) at Qatar

Educational Complex for Girls, shared his experience as a board member at the symposium. He encouraged more parents to consider serving on the boards of their children’s schools and called on schools to actively engage the boards in engaging parents. Following the main symposium, Dr. Weiss met with numerous independent school BOT members to discuss tangible ways for them to engage parents and help their schools develop concrete strategies.

“Parents, Partners in Education,” was the fifth symposium held by the SEC since the launch of Education for a New Era. The annual symposium brings together leading international experts from around the world, with Qatari experts, to address the most important, timely and cutting-edge education issues. Previous symposiums have focused on creativity, technology in education and international assessments.