




Engaging families: A partnership approach to targeting parents as partners and learners



'Connect 5': The Inter-relationships between Young People, Families, Education, Careers and their World: Aimhigher Lancashire 3rd National Conference, 2007

This information sheet presents key messages from the Tyne and Wear Aimhigher workshop delivered by Jim Pace who explained the need to move beyond simple engagement with families and the benefits of working with them as partners, who themselves can become potential HE learners. Their work builds on Aimhigher research by Dodgson and Whitam, 2003

 Dodgson, R., and Whitham H. (2003) Parents and Higher Education in the North East: Attitudes, Concerns, Influence and Engagement, Aimhigher: P4P North East, <http://www.aimhigher.northeast.ac.uk/images/pubFiles/Parents72.pdf>

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Workshop Context:

Parents are not only key influencers but also a potential target audience. By targeting parents / guardians to inform them about opportunities open for their child, they can also be triggered into considering education for themselves. Parents are not the only partners who can influence activities, the Tyne and Wear Aimhigher have a close working partnership with Connexions that enables them to target pupils and parents.

TOP TIPS AND KEY ISSUES



Partnership is vital : it is wise to seek out other organisations who aim at attracting the same target group as you, and work with them. This will enable you to attract more parents /carers and generate more ideas than working alone.





When **targeting** make sure you are clear about your target audience and how you are going to reach them. Working with others can provide access to data for targeting purposes, e.g. Connexions Service, Local Authority












Limit be clear about the number of people that you can cater for, otherwise you might end up with too few so the event is not viable or too many which would be an organisational catastrophe!



Answer parent concerns : Don't simply dictate and provide parents with information. Allow them to voice their concerns and answer them in an attempt to both reassure them and win them to your way of thinking! This dialogic process is one which the REAP team advocate, based on their own research relating to the FAHED project.

-  **Material** When presenting information, try to have a good balance between text and visuals, to entice the audience and vary presentational style. Make sure you have plenty of material with you and a range of leaflets on different topics. Also, importantly ensure you supply up-to-date contact details and web details, so parents can re-visit workshop material at own leisure.
-  **Parent Speakers** It is also a good idea to include speakers who are also parents. This works well because parents can relate with the speaker who has similar fears and aspirations as they may be experiencing. Equally, this would create a 'personal' approach to the workshops, whereby parents/carers would feel at ease to ask questions and get involved during the workshop.

FURTHER READING:

-  Bignall, T., and Box, L. (2002) Engaging black and minority ethnic families in policy development and implementation, REU Race Equality Foundation
http://www.reu.org.uk/projects/files/paper6_engagingfamilies.pdf
-  Campaign for Learning 'Family Learning'
<http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/fl/index.asp>
-  Changing Attitudes in South Tyneside was a 4 year parent and carer programme see web www.aimhigher.northeast.ac.uk/images/activityFiles/Howproudcampaign09.PDF
-  New Pathways HE IAG for Adults, A Tyne and Wear Aimhigher project with adults
http://www.aimhigher.northeast.ac.uk/content/Content.php?page=activities§ionType=cat_id§ionID=11
-  Connexions Practitioners Site
<http://www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships/>
-  Briefing Sheet 2: Engaging parents within a school setting to address parental concerns on accessing HE
-  Information Sheet 5: Working with the community and voluntary sector to raise ethnic minority families aspirations about FE and HE
-  Information Sheet 6: Innovative ways of connecting: communicating with parents
-  Information Sheet 8: Working with families through the Extending Services Agenda


Prepared on behalf of Aimhigher Lancashire



For other Information Sheets

This is one of 5 Information Sheets prepared following the 'Connect 5' Aimhigher Lancashire National Families Conference. For further details see:

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/Conference07.htm>

For further information about working with families, or copies of other resources, contact:

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 <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/index.htm>



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