

ENGAGING PARENTS AND CARE-GIVERS

Learning Brief - July 2021

This learning brief was produced by The Learning Trust following the Western Cape Community of Practice (CoP) meeting held in July 2021.



METHODS TO MOBILISE PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

After School Programmes (ASPs) should be aware of the interplay between the home, the school, and their own programmes. Mobilising parental engagement is notoriously difficult, yet many organisations have, through trial and error found effective ways to connect with the living space of the child. This learning brief will highlight some of these tried and tested methods of parental engagement.

COMMUNICATE, CARE & CONNECT

The impact of connecting with parents cannot be overemphasised. Parents who understand your programme and its value-add will encourage their children to attend. They will assist you to better understand their child and will ultimately own and fight for the organisation to remain in the community. The key ideas and methods in parent engagement fall into three broad categories...

Communicate

- **Trust** between the parents and your programme must be built first - it is relational!
- Regularly communicate **who** you are, **what** you do, **why** you do it, and **how** it helps the child, *and* the community.
- **Share photos and success stories** to inspire learners and their parents to be a part of your programme.
- Ask parents to take **joint responsibility** for their child's progress and development.

Care

- Give parents the opportunity **to get to know** the people they are entrusting their children to.
- **Provide guidance** to parents to assist at home with learning activities and homework.
- **Provide relevant services** and programmes for parents e.g., trauma counselling, community gardens, and food packs for families in need.
- **Empower parents** to realise that they can assist their children with their own strengths and resources.

Connect

- **Visit children at home** and get to know their parents. Make sure you have the correct contact information of parents and record any changes.
- Add parents to a **WhatsApp group** that is engaging and exciting. Share photos, activities, and videos. Tip – use a business account for one-way messaging.
- Organise **parent workshops** that address challenges and provide useful resources.
- Host informal lunch events, and end-of-year celebrations that **showcase** the work of your ASP.
- **Leverage existing relationships** to gain parents' trust, such as the school and the Church.
- **Schedule** several parents' meetings to ensure that parents can attend at least one in-between their busy schedules and other commitments.
- Make it **mandatory** for parents to register their learner in-person.
- **Encourage** parents to attend when there are events, awards, and a launch of a new programme.

As is the nature of community-development work, there is no *guaranteed* way to engage parents. What might work here will not work there, and what might work today will not necessarily work in 6-months' time. It is ever more important to explore different ways to understand the parents and guardians of the children and youth in your programmes and to try and test new means of involvement. It is also important to reflect and share what works as you go.

**The next and final CoP of the year will be held on
Wednesday, 13th October 10 – 12pm.**