

ReConnecting

Linking and informing the wider community of parents

Case Study: HIGH TECH HIGH, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

CONNECTIONS – with parents and the community

Entry to the school is by lottery and students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The digital student portfolio enables parents to review their child's progress from anywhere via the Internet and this makes the work of the school more transparent to parents. Parents are invited into the school by students to attend the SLC – the student led conference. The high-tech focus of the school fits in with the many high tech enterprises of the area and students are able to do internships with local firms. The adult type experience that students have in these last three years of their schooling gives them the confidence to make a success of this and leads to future employment. Many parents working in high tech enterprises want their kids to come to the school but balance is maintained through admission by lottery.

Students' comments:

"At the SLC we tell our parents them how we are doing and what we are doing – for example, like time management"

Case Study: Sir William Burrough Primary School

CONNECTIONS – Bringing parents together:

Sir William Burrough is a hub for its community. 'Cup of Tea Mornings' are alive with great ideas and suggestions, and 'Opening Doors' brings families from diverse cultures together in each other's homes, where tolerance, understanding and food are all served up in equal measure. The Toddler Group is simultaneously a hive of activity and a place of peace and joy, and a great introduction to "big school."

Case Study: Bishops Park College, Jaywick, Essex

CONNECTIONS – with parents and the community

Relationships between parents and their children's teachers were very strong and positive. Parents very much appreciated the care which all staff took to get to know their child thoroughly, and knew that tutors, teachers and learning mentors were easily accessible in person or by phone or email.

At the end of every term, a Saturday morning Academic Mentoring session was arranged for every student, who would accompany their parents or carers to the College and meet their tutor to show their work for the

term to their family, and share what they had achieved. This was always a very well attended event, and often had a peripheral family event running alongside it. Students took every opportunity to invite members of their families into the College, regularly planning exhibitions (for example, of Faculty work) or other demonstrations of their work.

There were frequent visitors to the College, both from the local and the wider community. People from varied walks of life came to work with students, often giving them a taste of life beyond compulsory schooling, during Faculties or clubs, and broadening their horizons; from a local businessman who spent the day assessing their proposals for a new company, to the Holocaust survivor whose memories stunned them into an awed silence. When visitors came to see the College, it was always a group of students who showed them round.

The Bishops Park site provided accommodation to the public library, and a day care centre for the elderly, as well as a nursery. Students became involved with all of these, using the library, visiting people in the day care centre and doing work experience in the nursery. In many ways, the site became a hub for the community of Jaywick.

Students' comments

"When Mum comes to see you on Academic Saturday, it's like I've got two mums!"(1)

Case Study: Madeley Court School

CONNECTIONS – bringing together school and community

Parents are of vital importance in the community school concept. Their partnership with the school is part of the essential fabric of education. At Madeley Court parents were invited in to the classrooms to share in lessons and participated in the Parents and School Coordinating Committee which one year raised £30,000 for the school. Their involvement went beyond traditional bounds - according to the Ofsted Report, parents had a consultative role in relation to the relevance of the curriculum for young people growing up in Telford.

Relationships with the business world were close. In an area of severe unemployment in the late 1970s work experience was seen as a high priority. Each student in Year 11 engaged in a work experience assignment, individually negotiated and written up. Parents contributed to this process. The school introduced School-to-Work conferences to Shropshire after 1977 on the Industrial Society model whereby local employers came to the school to work in small groups and workshops with the students.

Case Study: Stanley Park High School

CONNECTIONS – Forming links locally, nationally and overseas

The school stresses the importance of excellent relationships with parents. The school works very hard to ensure that they are fully involved in the topping and tailing of every initiative. Most recently they have taken an active role in the redevelopment of the assessment procedures and the introduction of Student Led Conferences. One parent commented:

"I'm glad the school have initiated this, as it will prepare my daughter to take ownership in her education and progress. I was really impressed to see my daughter being able to present in a confident manner and I'm sure this student led conference will prepare her for the future."

Participating in coordinated interagency work

Case Study: St. Nicholas School

CONNECTIONS – leading new developments, leading interagency collaboration:

St Nicholas has a dedicated home-school support team to create strong links with parents. Teachers work with a range of other agencies as well as with other schools as this is fundamental to its collaborative approach. The satellite classes in secondary schools and the FE unit are strong exemplars of partnership work with clear reciprocal benefits. Project work with charities and universities has explored new approaches to using puppetry or hydrotherapy with our students. The school hosts and runs training courses and programmes with a wide take up within the community.

Being a hub for community resources and community based exhibitions

Case Study: Stantonbury Campus, Milton Keynes

CONNECTIONS – with parents and the community

The students came from the wide catchment area that the school served and they came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. With this in mind, community relations were a central feature of school atmosphere and organisation. On the site of the school were two leisure centres, a theatre, an ecumenical centre, a medical centre and shops. They were jointly used by the school and the community. Great emphasis was placed on involving the community in the life of the school. When the school was first opened, staff ran a variety of workshops for parents on Saturday mornings to build relationships and give them a flavour and knowledge of different styles of teaching within the curriculum. These were very successful in developing parent/teacher relationships. Parents then became more involved in the life of the school. Coffee mornings were held where parents could then informally visit classrooms. Each Hall had a parent/teacher group. Parents could come in and work alongside a teacher in the classroom.

Shared, peer led CPD

Ebbsfleet Academy, N.W .Kent

CONNECTIONS – bringing teachers together to improve teaching

The Ebbsfleet Academy has a small teaching staff of 40 teachers who are beginning to work together as a community to develop pedagogy and improve learning and teaching. A weekly tea and toast teaching sharing session provides a forum for teachers to discuss learning and teaching while developing professional relationships. Learning and teaching observation cycles are now based around peer observation, which provide a focus for all of the teaching community to select their own observation focus and observe each other.

Case Study: Sir William Burrough Primary School

CONNECTIONS – Teacher CPD:

The IPC is a powerful conduit to exemplify the schools approach to learning where the teachers are learning along with the children and are encouraged and supported through their engagement in an exciting curriculum – one where teachers feel comfortable not knowing all the answers. They explore the learning with the children using new technology to keep the learning alive and fresh. Sir Williams Burrough is a National Leadership School that gives its teachers an opportunity to widen their sphere of excellence and influence in partnership schools.

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Action and participant led reflection and research and development

Case Study: St. Nicholas School

CONNECTIONS – participant research leading to development:

Through its staff CPD programme, the school and the work of many of the teachers, contributes to the wider research community and the development of curriculum and assessment tools for learners with SEN.

Links with other schools and educational settings

Case Study: The Reggio Emilia Approach

CONNECTIONS – school and community

The Reggio schools were founded with the support of the municipality – the city authorities -and the close connection is maintained today. The link is provided by the pedagogistas (advisers) who listen, make connections and pass on good practice. In this way the educational activities of all the Reggio schools become the project of the municipality and are seen as part of the system of social services dedicated to the welfare of its children.

Connections between parents and schools are built into the running of the schools and parents and the relationship between educator, parent and child is central. With very young children this is essential and parents see themselves as playing a majorpart in the life of the schools, in governance and in children's learning.

Close links among teachers spring naturally from the vision of education that they share. With classes of around 25 sharing two teachers, an atelierista and other adults constant exploration discussion and evaluation naturally occurs – a form of natural continuing professional development. Teachers are with the children for 30 hours a week and for six hours a week they meet communally for planning, preparation and team building.