



## Community Best Practices Forum:

### **Working with Parents & Families to Support College Readiness & Success**

#### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION NOTES**

*Attendees participated in small group discussions on the topic of their choice. These discussions were intended to surface the knowledge of all participants regarding the issues, best practices, and resources available to support parent engagement.*

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### **Topic 1: Supporting Parents Through the College Application and Transition Process**

#### Issues / Challenges

- Getting stuck on the challenges (i.e. cost, distance)
- Parent involvement – getting parents to come
- Direct communication from schools
- Lack of knowledge
- Empowering families to advocate for themselves and work through the process
- Finding the right balance
- Parent knowledge about college

#### Best Practices

- Providing knowledge
- FAFSA4caster
- “We’ll cross that bridge when we get to it...”
- On-campus services (health center, tutoring, etc.)
- Parent meetings with:
  - Food and child care provided
  - Range of activities (e.g. performances, spa treatments, etc.)
  - Individual, one-on-one time
  - Interactive activities for parents and students
  - Students as recruiters
- Providing a checklist for guidance
- Working with schools
- Community/repetition/stability
- Communicating where students should be during long range of 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade
- Creating and hosting parent groups
- Holding individual meetings with parents that involve role playing and reviewing parent checklists

#### Resources Needed (& How To Access)

- Net Price Calculator
- FAFSA4caster
- Training – USDOE, Options
- NYSACAC, NACAC, CACNY
- Guide to the Common Application
- BigFuture.org

- NYCCollegeLine.org
- HESC Presentations
- College Board

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## Topic 2: Engaging Parents Who Speak Languages Other Than English

### Issues / Challenges

- Words not translatable
- Parents don't understand homework
- Staffing issues in schools re: languages
- Making parents feel comfortable
- Parents with little formal education re: understanding NYC and USA school systems
- Parents not understanding college options
- TIME!
- Undocumented immigrants
- Parents who are too engaged
- Students as translators for parents

### Best Practices

- Solution oriented
- Interpret college applications so parents can answer better
- Develop partnerships with other orgs with specialized knowledge
- Explain to parents step-by-step
- Varying meeting times for parents and services
- ALWAYS providing translation; bring buddy translator; DOE has some translators (9am-5pm)
- Connecting parents to other services
- Undocumented - organize opportunities, start some courses
- Parents involved in search process - through websites and college tours
- Parent panel with parents who have been through the process

### Resources Needed (& How To Access)

- Translations
- Websites
- College tours
- Parent Guides
- Students learning to pick up cards
- Connecting to other services
- College students to talk with parents

### **Topic 3: Parent Organizing**

#### Issues / Challenges

- Reaching out only to women by default / failure to involve men
- Access to parent availability / need correct contact info
- Lack of power
- Parents FEAR involvement because they are undocumented (need a safe space)
- Schools are not always parent-friendly (parents are intimidated because of metal detectors, security, etc.)
- Personality clashes/cliques/conflicts
- Requires dedicated staff person / someone who knows how to build relationships
- School culture that doesn't focus on relationship building

#### Best Practices

- Create/cultivate real relationships
  - Allow these relationships to build other relationships ("real" vs "ideal")
- One-on-ones - ask questions and listen / "give people power to decide"
- Training for staff/organizer/parent coordinator on relationship building (has to be explicit)
- Create parent-friendly schools:
  - Purpose-driven, not personality-driven
  - Partner with CBOs
  - Offer classes for parents, as well as events, parent trips, etc.
  - Ask what families and communities need
- Power analysis - train parents and staff to analyze structures and policies/ no more "us and them"
- Prioritize engagement
- Partner with other organizations
- Training for parents and real opportunities to participate

#### Resources Needed (& How To Access)

- NYS offers reimbursement for college visits
- Foundations
- Title I money/funds
- Foundation partnering
- Corporate sponsor
- School budgeting

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### **Topic 4: Parent Engagement: Best Practices for Community-Based Organizations**

#### Issues / Challenges

- Buy-in from schools
- Support from school partners
- Contact with parents



- Parents' consistent/regular attendance
- Meeting communication styles/need for different parents
- How to support mentors to support youth
- Reporting success/measuring engagement for funders
- Engaging parents who are not at the table
- Identifying support system for older youth and youth in foster care
- Engaging disconnected parents of older youth
- Staffing/training/time/language to engage parents
- Parent expectations
- Leveraging parent coordinators

### Best Practices

- Home visits (or work at Starbucks)
- Focus on strengths of parents who are engaged
- Invite parents on college trips
- Health/literacy/employment resources for parents
- Incentives to engage (bingo card)
- Communicating in a way that parents are comfortable with (e.g. texting)
- Automated messages in multiple languages for different types of activities (e.g. test prep)
- Have parent/fun events at same time
- Engaging parent coordinators
- Personal phone calls
- Mandatory parent/guardian orientation
- Parent/guardian phone tree
- Financial investment

### Resources Needed (& How To Access)

- Staffing
- Translation – Available through the DOE and NY Immigration Coalition (headsets)
- Food
- Parent Guides in multiple languages (NYIC Guide in Spanish/Chinese)
- Career Zone NY
- Financial assistance for vocational training
- Resources for parents / facilitate engagement with admissions offices
- Parents who are motivational – to be speakers and panelists
- PD for staff – DYCD is developing a tool kit for parent engagement
- PD for mentors in how to share college experiences
- List of attendees at Forum – to share