The West Partnership presents:

Glasgow City Parents Group
A platform for parents and carers during the pandemic

The storyboard details how Glasgow City Parents Group provided a space for parents and carers to communicate during the pandemic. We hear how the group utilised digital technology to provide support to parents and families across the city.

GLASGOW CITY REGION Education

Family Learning
WEST PARTNERSHIP

What was the problem?

Prior to the establishment of the Glasgow City Parent Group, there had been a Parent Council Forum in Glasgow to provide a space for parent voices to be heard. By 2018, the forum had dissipated and Glasgow City Parents Group was created by volunteers who would meet regularly in-person to provide such a space. Despite the enthusiasm of the volunteers, numbers attending the in-person meetings were steadily decreasing over time. When the pandemic began, the group found a significant increase in parents looking for a space to communicate and learn about their children's education. The team wanted to adapt their communication methods to meet the emergent needs of parents during the pandemic.
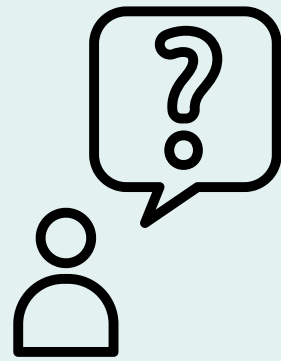
Why is this important?

Parents and carers are key individuals in our pupils' learning and wellbeing. The pandemic has been an unprecedented circumstance for our pupils and their families; having a space to hear parental voice is key to understanding the needs of parents and by extension their children. The strategy of remote learning has also placed increased importance on parental engagement.

Aims of the change to practice

The project had two main aims:

1) To continue empowering parents and carers across the Glasgow City region

2) To support parents and carers during the pandemic
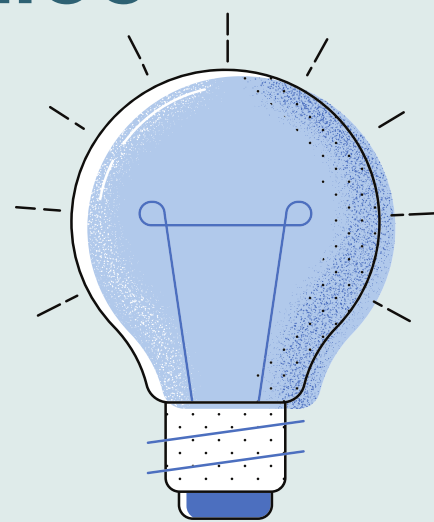
What did you do?

The Glasgow City Parents Group recognised that digital technology had become central to the lives of many parents and carers in Glasgow. This meant that some of the group's existing activities could be completed remotely using the same technologies that families were using to keep in touch with friends and family during lockdown. The group quickly focused on increasing their social media presence. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were all used as platforms to disseminate information about the group and also key information made available by Glasgow City Council. The group rapidly developed their own skills in this period, especially around the use of Zoom which was used to host interactive meetings with parents. The group organised two question and answer sessions with the authority's Executive Director of Education. Here, parents and carers could ask questions directly. Aside from these sessions, two webinars a month were hosted on Zoom for parents and carers. The group was supported by GCC, who paid for the groups extended Zoom license, while also offering resources and support on behalf of Education Services.

What happened?

The Glasgow City Parents Group has grown significantly over the last 12 months. Membership of the group has grown with the committee expanding to include more volunteers who, in some cases, have taken on more focused roles in sector-specific forums (forums have been set up to focus on equalities and early years for example). The group has had a significant increase in its followers online. As of early March, over 4000 people had liked their Facebook page and their Twitter group had just under 4000 followers. The group has posted a number of videos on their YouTube channel, with their Q and A sessions with the Executive Director of Education for GCC having over 2,500 views. YouTube has also been used to support family learning and parental engagement with videos on digital learning, learning outdoors, and mental health. The group's Zoom webinars have continued to grow and have focused on a number of areas. For example, webinars have focused on how to support parent councils in individual school communities and have also engaged with other agencies such as Police Scotland.

What are the key points you have learnt?

The group has noted a number of key learning points. Firstly, they recognise the flexibility that technological solutions offer. In their experience, platforms like Zoom, which parents said they preferred when surveyed, meant that parents had more time to attend as they didn't need to travel to in-person meetings. Secondly, the group believe that using a number of social media platforms, rather than a single platform, has been beneficial in accessing different audiences. Thirdly, the group has focused on being transparent of the group's vision, goals and objectives, which they believe has led to being seen as a professional, reliable and trustworthy organisation. Lastly, the group stress the importance of developing positive collaborative links with partner organisations.

What next for the project?

The group intends on continuing their provision of support and guidance for parents across the Glasgow region. New volunteers with focused remits will explore areas in greater depth with the long-term hope being that parents continue being engaged in decision making. The group are keen to continue their online provision and will look at ways of drawing upon its flexibility and accessibility to continue providing their services post-pandemic.

**NEXT**

The West Partnership presents:

Moorfoot Primary School, Inverclyde
Maintaining family learning culture during COVID19

This storyboard details how Moorfoot Primary continue to promote and support parental involvement in the life of their school. We hear about how the team responded to the Covid19 pandemic by changing their practice to further use digital technology to engage with parents.

GLASGOW CITY REGION Education

Family Learning WEST PARTNERSHIP

What was the problem?

Over a number of years Moorfoot Primary has been developing more effective ways of engaging with families to help them support their children's learning and raise attainment. The school had used Joyce Epstein's 6 types of parental engagement as a framework for improvement. As part of this improvement, an online learning blog had been set up in September 2019 to provide parents with high quality online resources to give them insight into the methodologies and practices used in Moorfoot Primary. The blog had proved very popular. With lockdown in place it seemed even more important to build on sharing learning with parents who were supporting home learning.
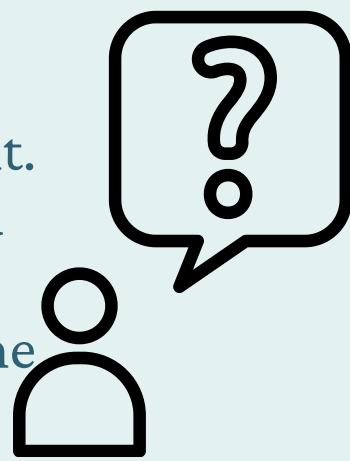
Why is this important?

Research has demonstrated the importance of family learning and parental involvement on attainment and learner experience. Positive relationships between home and school have also been found to correlate with positive learner experiences and attainment. Moorfoot wanted to continue their work on parental involvement.

Aims of the change to practice

The project had a number of aims:

1) To continue with the strategy to increase parental engagement despite Covid 19 restrictions, work commitments or personal time contraints.

2) To use digital technology to continue to provide all parents with high quality online resources that help them support their children's learning.
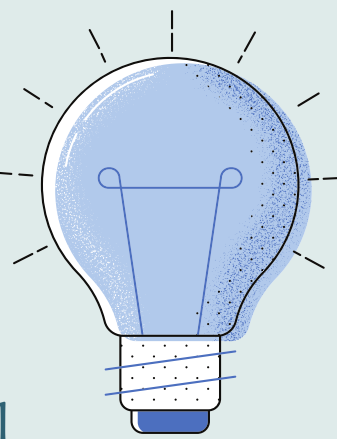
What did you do?

The team explored how they could adapt their practice using Epstein's parental engagement model (italicised here). For *parenting* there was a focus on offering a better transition family experience by sharing webinars and videos that helped familiarise families and children with the school and staff. For *communication* a weekly SWAY newsletter was developed in partnership with a focus group of parents. Written reports were replaced with more informal termly teacher-parent phone calls. As *volunteering* was impossible within the school, parents were invited (and continue to be invited) during the Education for Work event to share videos or attend pupils online Q & A sessions to talk about work experience. To meet Epstein's *learning at home* criteria, webinars and videos were offered to upskill parents in getting involved in the learning. For example, live Maths sessions were held to support parents in supporting their children. The parent forum was also involved in *decision making* through collecting feedback via a Microsoft Form attached to every weekly newsletter. *Collaboration with the community* was enhanced via the weekly Friday assembly recorded and shared with the whole community.

What happened?

Using digital technology meant that more parents were being reached. The school Twitter account reached 1900 followers. There were increased numbers of parents interacting with the webinars and videos and more than 100 people regularly responding to Microsoft forms as they could be easily and anonymously accessed. Families reported feeling supported as they could easily find practical support to help them support their children's learning in an easily accessible digital space. Videos rather than written information or even face to face events seemed to better meet the needs of busy, working parents. The school is in discussion with partner agencies such as Inverclyde Communication Outreach Service (ICOS) in creating videos about autism to share with parents. There were also examples of parents contributing to videos, with some sharing tips about how to support home learning.

What are the key points you have learnt?

The team have identified a number of key lessons learnt. Firstly, the team believe that building and sustaining relationships was the core driver of all the work. Using Epstein's model of parental engagement provided an effective framework to build these relationships. Secondly, the team note that a diverse use of digital platforms (YouTube, school website, sways, Twitter and Facebook) was useful, but note that having one central point of contact was helpful. The school used a ThingLink noticeboard as a location where parents could access all information. Thirdly, the team placed importance on being transparent with feedback. The team found value in highlighting negative and positive feedback before sharing how they would respond in the weekly newsletter. Fourthly, the team believed that regularly gathering anonymous feedback from parents via a Microsoft Form normalised the process of parental evaluation.

What next for the project?

The team have identified a number of future steps. Firstly, they intend on continuing to review the parental engagement strategy against Joyce Epstein's model of parental engagement. The team also intends on using digital technology to further involve parents in supporting the curriculum. This could, for example, support children with developing online interview skills and making and sharing videos.

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