



## In the West Partnership: Family Learning and Parental Engagement

### Family Cooking Groups

In Bellshill Academy we have ran 3 very successful family cooking sessions which were well attended by a range of families. Each of the sessions ran over a six week period in the evenings. Both sessions were planned and developed in consultation with our partners. The cooking sessions focussed on cooking on a budget and families were given the opportunity to cook healthy low cost meals. Families cooked together and at each session families were given a recipe bag containing a recipe card and all the ingredients required to re-create that dish again at home.

#### What was your aim?

The overall aim was to meaningfully engage our parents and carers in their child's learning and life at school through a family learning programme. Our family cooking sessions were aimed at S1-S3 with the aim of closing the poverty related gap and raising attainment. The aims of the sessions were to enable families to learn together, spend quality time together, develop skills and knowledge, improve overall health and wellbeing and develop more positive relationships. Also to raise attainment and achievement, ensure equity and equality and improve opportunities and outcomes for all learners.



### Method



#### Give a brief description of the method you are going to undertake or have taken:

Using a Community Learning and Development approach, informal sessions offered a non-threatening opportunity to engage parents. Staff supported parents to support their child's learning. Families worked together in the sessions as well as within the larger group. All food was provided and sessions were free to promote equity and equality.

### Process Change



**Plan** - The project was designed to enable us to increase parental engagement through introducing a family learning programme. The family cooking sessions originated from a consultation with parents around the development of a Parents Forum. The aims were to create an opportunity for families to learn together in a fun and relaxed environment. The resources included staffing in the form of our Home Economics teacher and CLD Worker (Schools) who would co-ordinate and run the sessions. The programme was led by the DHT PEF. We also required cooking/baking resources, ingredients and a Home Economics classroom. The sessions ran in the evening and each block ran over a 6 week period.

**Do** – Undertake family cooking groups

**Study** – They were all hugely successful projects and resulted in an increase in parental engagement in Bellshill Academy. From the project we learned that there was a need to adapt communication methods to reach wider audience. Also that changing the evening and time of the sessions would result in an increase in the number of participants.

**Act**- Next steps were to offer further opportunities for family learning through cooking groups. We adapted the method we used to communicate with parents based on parental feedback and this has resulted in a higher number of participants. Also we have adapted our family learning programme to include a baking group.

### Achievements



- Each course has been well attended with all participants completing the full course.
- High level of participation and engagement from parents.
- Some parents complete SQA L3 Measuring (within ALN Core Skills).
- Families developed skills in cookery and hospitality
- Families successfully cooked meals and practiced the skills at home through donation of recipe bags.
- Developed in consultation with parents and local partners.
- Celebration meal attended by participants invited guests – opportunity to dine together as a family and celebrate success.
- Further parental engagement has developed from these activities.

### Key Learning Points



#### PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- Consultation with parents is key
- Partnership working has been fundamental to this project such as CLD inc youth services.
- Local partners support sustainability eg Tesco Community Champion

#### LIMITATIONS

- Childcare issues can prevent families from attending
- Dates and times due to resources/ staffing.

### Results

#### What was the result of your project?

- Due to the success of the initial project further cooking sessions have now taken place.
- Achievement of SQA L3 Measuring for some adult participants.
- Project led to strong engagement with parents / families.
- Project demonstrated a fully inclusive and equitable approach.
- The cooking groups were attended by people from a wide range of diverse backgrounds, ensuring equity and equality.
- Skills for life and work developed in practical cookery, hospitality and numeracy (measuring).
- Young people/ parents report enjoying bonding/family time.
- Relationships nurtured and enhanced with young people, families and staff.
- Feedback from parents, young people and their extended families has been overwhelmingly positive.
- The family cooking sessions afforded both the adults and the young people the opportunity for personal achievement and successes in a number of areas.
- The feedback provided by the families and their extended guests was overwhelmingly positive with one of the guests reporting that the chicken dish had tasted nicer than the one he had ate at Jamie Oliver's London restaurant earlier that week.

### Conclusion



- Cooking is an effective way to engage with families within the high school environment and this has led to further parental engagement opportunities developing.
- Family learning provides opportunities to build positive relationships with families whilst promoting learning.
- Feedback was exceptionally positive from families who have participated in the courses and attended the celebration events.
- Partnership working has been highly effective.
- Cooking supports nurturing relationships.
- Communication via email has proved to be most effective to inform parents and book places.
- These sessions have given us the opportunity to actively and meaningfully engage our parents and carers in their child's learning and life at school.
- The family learning sessions made a notable difference to the aspirations and achievements of the children and also the skills, confidence and ambition of the parents.

### Scale / Spread



#### What next for your project?

- Continue to develop this group offering a variety of days and times.
- Expand skills by including baking groups as an alternative to cooking.
- Use local opportunities with partners to offer innovative approaches and healthy competition within local area.
- Maximise opportunities to engage with parents through these groups.
- Joint project with our local Secondary school – 'Bellshill Bake Off'
- Transition project with our cluster primary schools
- Arrange opportunities for childcare, while the sessions are running, to eliminate this barrier