School Context

SSSJ is part of a Multi Academy Trust in the North of England. Liz Peacock the head teacher started at the school in 2008 as head after the school had been given the Ofsted inspection classification of 'Special Measures'. Their recent Ofsted inspection graded them at 'Outstanding'.

SSSJ was IPC accredited at Mastering in 2014 and went for reaccreditation in 2017 where they were awarded Mastering.

The Journey at SSSJ:

Staff at SSSJ had a history of little engagement with parents. Many parents had a poor experience of schools themselves. The school wanted to look for ways to engage their parent community.

They started by capturing the parents imagination through Entry and Exit Points of the IPC units. This resulted in parents coming in to school. Liz said that they now feel they're at a point where they can share pedagogy with their parent community because of the progress they have made with engaging with parents.

The two key access points for parents coming into school are through the beginning and end of the IPC units – the entry and exit points, and through parent workshops. Both opportunities are included in the planning cycle for the IPC, with teachers now including opportunities for parental engagement as part of the planning process. The home learning logs they introduced have also helped to engage parents with their child's learning. The home learning logs include a choice of six learning activities and staff have seen real shared enjoyment of learning with these activities by children and their parents.

Liz shares how the parent workshops are run and how they relate to the IPC.

Parent Workshops

The parent workshops which we started this year have been hugely successful. We have two designated members of staff to plan and run these workshops; a classroom practitioner and a bilingual teacher assistant. They are run weekly and have gone from 4 or 5 parents attending at the beginning of the year to 15 to 20.

The sessions run for about 45 mins, and we have found optimum time is before school pick up, at 2.15 p.m. They begin with our teacher introducing the theme, covering some new knowledge for the parents. We always use a WALT (what are we learning today).

There is then an activity which each parent does with their child, sometimes a parent may work with additional children if their parents have been unable to attend.

The child is teaching their parent their learning, and they continue learning together. The children have done a lot of coaching through Kagan's cooperative strategies. They've learnt to coach each other so were well prepared for teaching their parents. Activities are wide ranging and always practical, parents have really enjoyed them.

At the end there is an evaluation and we can see how we have developed the parents' understanding of a particular theme. This is collated by the teacher and feedback to SLT.

The theme of the sessions for the coming year were planned in collaboration with myself and our IPC lead to tie into our action plan.
So far our themes have included: International Mindedness, Assessment, The IPC Learning Process and the learning and teaching of knowledge, skills and understanding.

Following the workshop on International Mindedness, parents were so involved in the activity they requested a further workshop on related learning.

They wanted to assess themselves so we provided rubrics which they used during the activity. A video is made of the workshop and this goes on school website, along with other information about it so parents unable to attend can watch, but this is also enjoyed by parents who attended in order to consolidate their own learning. The key for us is that parents are learning from their children.

Summary of our challenges:

- Making sure you’ve got a designated person to lead, the same person to lead over time. A Milepost 1 teacher was good because there was already a relationship with the parents because of the age of children. Our bilingual teaching assistant has been a great link for parents.
- Creating space to hold regular parent workshops.
- Regularly timetabling events such as parent workshops, and plan to ensure a clear focus of what you want to achieve.

Summary of our successes:

Engagement with our parents started with the first Exit Point. We’d just introduced the IPC with unit holiday show and children were showcasing their learning through a display of holidays that could be bought. Monopoly money had been printed for parents to buy 2 different holidays. But we didn’t know if we’d get any parents. Our school admin manager came to me and said I don’t mean to worry you but there’s bit of a queue of parents. We had over 100 at that first event. It’s the moment you want to capture in a bottle and put the cork in because you know it’s been a huge success.

Through parents attending events, we are not just enabling our children to see the bigger picture and develop an understanding of the world, we’re giving the opportunity to our parents.

Through the success of our parent workshops, we are now at the point where parents can start suggesting workshops.

We have found there is nothing better than children reinforcing their own learning by teaching their own parents, who will often ask more challenging questions!

Our community is not just our children, it’s our parents too. We are now a community of learners.

Key part of the IPC for our school:

The 8 Personal Learning Goals mean the world to our school. They are the core of our school. Personal Learning Goals should be at the start of an IPC journey.

To learn more about the IPC and how to become a members school contact info@fieldworkeducation.com or request and IPC info pack here.