Parent Power

A community organising scheme for parents in Lambeth and Southwark run by King's College London in partnership with Citizens UK

Parent Power is a parental engagement project run in partnership with community organising charity Citizens UK. It uses community organising methods to mobilise and train local underrepresented parents, enabling them to become university access experts in their local communities, while also giving them the tools to start campaigns against educational inequality. These tools, popularised by famous civic movements such as the American Civil Rights Movement and the Living Wage Campaign, and championed by expert community organisers such as Saul Alisnky and Barack Obama, include 121s, house-meetings, listening campaigns, and collective action.

Since July 2017, the project has already engaged over 200 underrepresented parents, recruiting 35 as local parent power leaders. They meet once a month to campaign on issues of educational inequality, such as the unaffordability of summer schools or private tutoring, or the inaccessibility of university open days. They have already won bespoke open days to the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Leicester, received training on tutoring, student finance and university access, won bursary places at private summer schools and met with the MET police and others to demand better local educational provision for their children.

After such innovative engagement techniques, 100% of parents involved have said that they now know more about how to access highly selective universities, while 100% would also recommend it to fellow parents.

Winning this trip, and the Parent Power programme more generally, has shown me that we really do have power. We have power to open doors which otherwise seem closed. Through building a community of parents we have the power that we otherwise wouldn't. There is power in numbers as they say.
Miata Noah, Parent Power Leader following the trip to Oxford University

Parent Power is fantastic. It is empowering us to help our children, and building such a fantastic relationship with King's. We are not alone in this fight for education and now I know that King's is only a text away.
Betty Iziku, Parent Power Leader

Establishing Parent Power
A 7 Step process

1. Recruiting Schools	• Build relationships with schools (you may already have programmes that can facilitate this) • Explain the programme • Secure buy-in from senior leadership
2. Group meetings in schools	• 10-15 parents are invited to an in-school meeting led by a university outreach officer and community organiser • The meeting is used to build relationships (through discussing questions like 'Why is education important to you?')
3. 121 conversations with parents	• These are an imperative part of the process and involve the outreach officer or community organiser holding 30 minute one-to-one meetings with parents • These are used to build strong relationships
4. Campus meetings	• Meetings for 30-40 parents held once every 6 weeks on a Saturday morning with childcare and lunch provided • During the meetings parents discuss campaigns, recieve training on university access and hear from inspirational speakers • The meetings also provide the opportunity to build a team and develop leaders
5. Run a listening campaign	• Conduct one-to-one conversations with parents to listen to them and find worthwhile and winnable tangible issues that parents can tackle • For example, Parent Power has campaigned on the cost of private summer school places and the inaccessibility of open days.
6. Research the issues	• Parent leaders explore and look into the issues and various solutions. • Decisions are made about whether it is worthwhile and whether the solution is winnable or feasible. • They then look at key players and work out how to effect the change. In many cases this will involve getting a meeting with decision makers.
7. Take action and negotiate	• Parent leaders get to the person who has the power to make a change. They then take action and negotiate.