

# Anticipate barriers

## I. Activity type and description

'Some barriers to engagement – stress, employment, working more than one job, wide-ranging family commitments – you can't address. But other things may be considerably easier to deal with.' This is a list of suggestions to tackle common barriers.

## II. Material/resources needed

- Solutions board (big board, post-its)
- Small room to provide childcare with toys and volunteers
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## III. Instructions

Try making a list of possible reasons for lack of engagement. Examples might include a lack of interest; lack of transport; childcare/other caring issues; English as an additional language. Now, instead of treating these as problems inherent in parents, try to see them as barriers to overcome or to help parents overcome.

This is a two-step process: the temptation is to jump immediately into finding or suggesting solutions but, particularly for some issues, this misses an important step of understanding either why the barrier exists in the first place or how it affects parents' engagement. For example, do you really know that parents aren't interested in their children's learning? Are they unwilling or simply unable to come to school (which is certainly not the same thing)?

Here are some suggestions for tackling common barriers:

- Ensure that you have easy access to the transport information that your parents need. When does the last bus leave school that will get parents home in the evening? Use these timetables to plan events.
- Have a crèche available for times you expect parents to be in school for more than a few minutes. Sometimes a local nursery nearby is happy to send along a few members of staff to create a pop-up crèche for the evening. They get to advertise themselves to parents, and you get the opportunity to work with parents who aren't distracted by younger children.
- Be mindful of other commitments that communities and families may have. If a World Cup football game is on the same day, you will have lots of empty seats!
- Consider having a 'solutions board' in the staff room where colleagues can chip in with ideas for increasing parent partnership and engagement.

## IV. References

Goodall, J., & Weston, K. (2018). *100 Ideas for Primary Teachers: Engaging Parents*, Bloomsbury Publishing. Page 11

V. Alternatives

*n/a*