

Inspiration and Upskilling: Building skills challenge

A family teamwork challenge to explore how different skills and strengths can suit a range of career and education options.

Activity objectives

- To start conversations about essential and transferable skills and prompt further conversations at home.
- To create a safe, supportive space where families and the school/college can focus on the skills of the student rather than on the complexities and pressures of education and career options and pathways.
- To build families' confidence in engaging with school/college activities and provide a foundation for future careers guidance discussions.

How to use it

- For use with parents and students with similar needs or shared experiences, e.g. EAL, SEND; this activity is also particularly beneficial for parents who might be disengaged or lacking in confidence.
- Can be used as part of the series of Inspiration and upskilling events as a targeted intervention with the same families.
- Most suitable when students are in Key Stage 3.

Delivery time

 1 hour

Need to know

- If in person, you will need resources for the teamwork challenges (e.g. building blocks).
- If delivering virtually, you will need to plan challenges based on accessible household objects or send students home with the relevant materials.
- This activity is for parents and students to attend together so if you are delivering remotely, it should be planned for after school, with time allowed for the child to get home.

Links to parental engagement recommendations

- Create a parent-friendly environment.
- Build trust with socially-disadvantaged families.
- Refocus careers activities to involve parents.
- Stimulate family conversations.
- Draw on parents as a resource.

For more information on recommended principles for parental engagement go to [Good Parental Engagement](#).

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Preparing the session with parents in mind

Content & format







- Plan one or more teamwork challenges that will be at the core of the session. They should rely on collaboration and promote essential skills such as problem-solving and proactivity. For more information on essential skills and their definitions, use the [Skills Builder Framework](#).
 - The teamwork challenge element should last around 20 minutes, and be accessible to allow parents with EAL, or parents with low literacy levels, to engage.
 - The following ideas would work both in person and virtually:
 - Recreating a building blocks construction from memory and seeing how accurate your version is (explained below).
 - Making a paper plane and seeing how far you can get it to fly.
 - Building the tallest tower out of spaghetti and marshmallows or newspaper and tape.
 - Completing a scavenger hunt round the building, outdoor space or inside the home.
 - More ideas for teamwork challenges can be found online.
 - Consider using parent, older student or alumni volunteers to support each family if you are in person and working with specific groups such as EAL or SEND. The volunteer can help them understand the activity, ask questions and draw out key skills.
- When delivering in person, make the environment as parent-friendly as possible:
 - Set up the space with tables, where each family can collaborate on the challenge or multiple families can work together.
 - Serve snacks to make the event more appealing to families and encourage an informal atmosphere.

Communication

- This should be an invitation-only event for specific families. Consider inviting wider members of the household, including grandparents and younger and older siblings, to reduce barriers to attendance, such as childcare.
- If this is the first of a series of interventions with the same families, set this out in your invitation. To help maintain momentum you could set mini family learning challenges in between events to encourage skills development to continue at home, and the results of these could be shared at the next event.
- Emphasise the fun, informal nature of the event to reduce concerns from disengaged parents or those who have negative associations with coming into school/college and consider the channels of communication that might suit this audience best – for example, reminder text messages might boost their attendance.

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Delivery steps

Step	Activity	Time
1.	Start with a brief introduction to transferable and essential skills, such as team building and thinking critically about solving a challenge. Use examples that families can relate to, such as putting a child's name on a PE kit as an example of proactivity (thinking ahead to a potential problem and doing something to avoid it). Then talk about the specific skills the challenge will require.	 10 minutes
2.	Encourage families to think about the importance of skills in the workplace with questions about skills e.g. Name some jobs and discuss which skills you think they need. Why are the skills important to these jobs? Ask them to keep a record of their answers.	 10 minutes
3.	Families now complete the challenge. The example below is for a building blocks challenge run in person. Each family nominates one person to go and look at a complicated building blocks construction, without touching it or taking notes. They then come back and explain to the rest of the family how to build it using their set of blocks. The family can send different people up each time to look at it and go up as many times as they need to. Once they have finished it, the family asks for their model to be judged by the event facilitator or by other families.	 20 minutes
4.	Ask families to look back at their discussion (step 2) about jobs and the skills required. Then get them to talk about which skills they used in the challenge and how they could be used at work. For example: Which skills did you use that helped you with the challenge? What part of the challenge did you find easy or difficult? List the skills other members of the family used to help solve the challenge. When do you use these skills in your lives? What kinds of jobs might use these skills? If you are using volunteers, they can support families in these discussions and if necessary, feed back to the group on their behalf.	 10 minutes
5.	At the end of the session, direct families to the conversation starter activity online to help them continue talking about skills and careers at home. Let them know who to talk to for more information or help.	 5 minutes
6.	Allow time at the end of the activity for families to chat to staff and volunteers on an informal basis to encourage conversations to continue beyond the event.	 5 minutes

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Learning from the event

- Event facilitators could call families after the event and discuss what they plan to do next. They can also signpost them to tools such as the [Family action plan](#), where they can record the steps they are going to take to support their child's decision-making.
- You may also want to survey attendees to establish their engagement with the event, particularly if it is part of a package of interventions with the same parents and students. Example questions and a survey template are available [here](#).
- Ensure families recognise what they have achieved by sharing images of the event with them afterwards if it has been conducted face to face. Include photos of their responses to the questions so that they can reflect as a family on the skills they can help their children develop.
- To gain a deeper understanding, evaluate the event within the context of your wider careers provision, both from the perspective of students and parents – guidance on doing this is included [here](#).



Feedback

Take part in our parental engagement project by providing valuable feedback on this resource by completing this [short survey](#)

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