

Publicity seeking: doing it the Newham way

Supplementary schools have to work hard to get coverage in their local press, says Martin Pinder. See below for five top tips from the recently-established Newham Complementary Education Partnership for getting your school in the news.

Tip 1: A picture is worth a thousand words

Attract and encourage as many volunteer photographers as possible to record your events, and provide a wide range of photos. You can never have enough! You will need to be super-organised to get parental and personal permission forms in, allowing the photos to be published.

Tip 2: Celebrate your diversity!

Put on your party clothes and be colourful, not least for the photo opportunities!

Tip 3: Showcase your pupils' performances

Find ways to do this at joint events and in assemblies at mainstream schools. These events strengthen potential links and partnerships with mainstream schools, creating possibilities for future collaboration. Showcasing your dance, fashion, music, singing or other performances is selling your school to potential mainstream school partners and their pupils – some of the latter may be interested in attending your supplementary school. Mainstream schools like events such as these, because they add something different to what they can already offer their pupils – and they foster community cohesion and awareness of diversity.

Tip 4: Share publicity efforts with mainstream schools

Mobilise photographers from the mainstream schools near you, as well as from your own. Try drafting a joint press release with a mainstream school, so that you both get a mention. Provided you have nice photos, a joint approach is likely to increase the chance of your story appearing in the local press. We have found that including a mention of the mainstream school we are working with also reinforces the diversity message; most mainstream schools in Newham speak more than 40 or 50 languages.

Tip 5: Celebrate annual events

There are many important annual events which epitomise something important that your school stands for. So, plan something interesting on an important date – for instance, related to your school's cultural heritage, religious festivals, language or learning activities, or national events.

Putting these five tips into practice

On 26 September, the Newham Complementary Education Partnership (NCEP) put these five rules into practice when celebrating the European Day of Languages. This day is for celebrating all languages, not only European ones – and particularly a day to celebrate the numerous languages spoken in the school. This year, NCEP negotiated three joint events in local mainstream schools, both primary and secondary, where the host school opened the event and set the scene, with local supplementary schools performing and showcasing children's skills.

To find out more, email Martin Pinder, Newham Complementary Education Partnership, at martinpinder7@hotmail.com or call him on 07951 815 621.

Examples of annual events you could commemorate (dates may vary)

World Book Day – 1 March (www.worldbookday.com)

European Day of Language – 26 September (<http://edl.ecml.at>)

United Nations Day – 24 October (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Day)

International Children's Day – 1 June (www.un.org/en/events/childrenday)

Refugee Week – June (www.refugeeweek.org.uk)

Black History Month – October (www.black-history-month.co.uk)

Human Rights Day – 10 December (www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday/2011)

Holocaust Memorial Day – 27 January (This can commemorate many international tragedies and histories of discrimination.)

