

Case study | Starting a Hub

Learning about the community

Learn more about Community Hubs with these real-life examples. In this case study, Caroline Menassa, leader of St Dominic's Community Learning Centre Hub, tells us how she explored what services and activities would work best for families.

What was the challenge?

Playgroups are a great way to learn what the community needs. My approach is this: add a playgroup, stir and by doing that you've created a small village where parents can get involved and become empowered to do new things. When families in a playgroup feel comfortable and trust you, that's when you can start to find out about their needs and interests. Our Hub's English classes, computer and Zumba classes are all spin-offs from our playgroup. I try to see what parents are good at and encourage them to do short courses to develop their leadership and other skills.

What worked? What didn't?

One to one conversations, personal invitations are the best way to find out what parents want. For example in the second last session of our English class I go in and ask parents questions: how they're going, what's been happening with the class, what they want to do more of. Sending out surveys or forms for parents to fill in is virtually useless. You hardly ever get any back. Language barrier is obviously a problem with forms but even translated survey forms don't work.

"Be curious and don't make assumptions about parents."

Your advice?

Identify and nurture a group of parents with leadership skills to act as communicators. It's physically impossible for me to get around to every parent. So I have a group of parents who are my leaders. They help spread the word to everyone about meetings, collaborations and activities.

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www.communityhubs.org.au/resources

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Community Hubs is a national program that links families and their preschool children to services and support, learning opportunities or the wider community. Community Hubs makes it easier for families to access the assistance they need by bringing local education, health, community and settlement information and services into a familiar and friendly place such as a school or community space.

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