

The



Smart

Kid

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 7

01 JUNE 2008

REBRANDING FOR A WIDER REACH

When we launched just over two years ago our main focus was to address the problems black families are facing within the education system in the UK. However over time it has become apparent that people from a much wider range of backgrounds have embraced the key tenets of the project and found the topics covered in our newsletters enlightening. It is against this backdrop that we have decided to rename the project to enable us reach out to as many as possible. The project will now be known as **The Smart Kid**, a name which continues to reflect our primary mission.

Our fundamentals remain the same; we want to equip parents so that they will be em-

powered to help their children fulfil their potential. We will share **vital information** with parents which we hope will enlighten and motivate them to take positive action for their children. Their children will become Smart not just when they are young and tender but by laying a solid foundation, they will stand the test of time all the way up to adulthood and fulfil their potential.

We expect that the parents who use our materials will then share the information with their peers, friends and family thus influencing one another within their communities. These gradual but consistent efforts will produce a shift in the culture and value system in the UK thus placing every child on an equal footing and opening up the opportunities to stand a fighting chance in life.

We are at this point also launching our website www.thesmartkid.org. You will find all the past copies of our newsletters on the site and the future editions will be deployed via this avenue. You can continue to ask questions about your child's education from pre-school years all the way up to university by sending your emails; if required a dedicated member of our team will contact you by phone. Our new email address is info@thesmartkid.org. Kindly update your contacts list with this address so that future correspondence from us will not be filtered out by your servers.

In the past year we have run a few seminars ranging from education seminars for parents to career awareness sessions for youth groups. If you belong to

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

REBRANDING FOR A WIDER REACH	1
PREPARING FOR GCSEs	1
COMPONENTS OF THE PERFECT CV	2
READERS' CORNER	3
CODE CRACKER	4

a community or group that can benefit from such seminars do not hesitate to contact us at the email address above to find out what opportunities are available.

We trust that we will have your continued support as we take this project a step further to reach out to a wider audience.

- Bunmi Adekeye

PREPARING FOR GCSEs

I have often been asked the question: *when is the best time for a child to start preparing for the GCSE exams?* I wish there was a straightforward answer to this question but from experience the best answer I can give is 'as soon as possible'. I guess this prompts yet another question, how soon is early enough but not too early? Perhaps one of the best ways to find out is to examine how the system works as this may help in arriving at the right conclusion.

Although final GCSE grades are mainly awarded at the end of

year 11, the grades are actually acquired over the course of two years i.e. in years 10 and 11. GCSE grades are made up of a combination of coursework and actual exams and in some schools, the journey even begins from as early as year 9. To be honest it came as a shock to me when at the end of year 9 my son casually announced that the course work he had just submitted actually constituted a certain percentage of his final GCSE grade.

The system of working towards the final grade over a period of time is designed to help children achieve higher grades as they will not at the mercy of a single examination in a single instance.

And since each piece of work is graded soon after completion, it is easier to gauge what level the child is operating at and take corrective action promptly if required. The trouble is that if the school is not communicating adequately or if the child is non-communicative (which is typical of most teenagers) then potentially a lot of damage may have been done before the final exams in year 11.

So what can we as parents do? Develop good interviewing skills and ask intelligent questions; the more you know, the

better equipped you are to support your child. From about year 8 or 9, each time you attend the parents evening or have the opportunity to contact the school, seize the opportunity to find out how the school's GCSE calendar works. I have heard the saying *Knowledge is Power* but recently I heard a speaker restate this as *Applied Knowledge is Power*. So let us **get** the information and then **use it** to support and equip our precious ones.

- Bunmi Adekeye

To receive future copies of this free newsletter send an email to info@thesmartkid.org

COMPONENTS OF THE PERFECT CV

We all know the importance of our children scoring highly on tests and getting good grades and we would do anything to support them to achieve this goal.

Many of you would have read my article on the importance of extra-curricular activities as a vital component of a well balanced CV.

Recently I had the opportunity to speak at length with a senior HR executive at a top UK investment firm about what top tier employers are looking for in a Graduate CV. By graduate, I mean someone less than 25yrs, who is at university or left within the last 12 months. What she said was food for thought and highlighted to me, just how much more we need to know about the perfect CV.

Great Grades

Not just good grades but great grades! A record one in four A-level exams resulted in an A grade this year, as the pass rate rose for the 25th year in a row. An A grade is not what it used to be.

Extra curricular Activities

I think I've said enough on this

subject. Check out issues 4 and 5 for detailed articles on extra

relevant work experience in the field you child wants to go into is vital

curricular activities.

The Right University

Take it from me; top-tier employers discriminate based on the university you attended.

The following extract from the *Any Questions* section of the **Telegraph Education on 25/08/07** proves the point:

Q I am about to start the third year of a history degree at Chichester, one of the smallest universities in the country; it was awarded university status only in 2005.

You say that people should aim for the best university they can, but I think it's wrong to be too caught up in league-table rankings.

My friends at universities such as Manchester, Nottingham, Liverpool and Edinburgh have expressed their amazement at how good my experience has been - regular tutorials with lecturers who will stop for a chat over coffee to continue a debate and varied, intellectually challenging material.

There is no element of that stereotypical belief that a degree is easier to obtain at a lesser university. Aren't you being a little snobby?

A Until the University of Chichester gets better known for the excellence of its graduates, I suspect that employers will be more likely to offer job interviews to history graduates from Nottingham or Edinburgh.

You're right, though, that students are often happier and more motivated at the new universities, possibly because staff are less caught up, as a rule, in proving their eminence for research.

In summary if it isn't a Russell Group top-tier university (see issue 3 for definition), your child may struggle to get a high-flyer job in a prestigious firm.

Many employers were against Tony Blair's higher education reform and the conversion of polytechnics into universities. The resultant effect being that even if a child has great grades and then studies at an ex polytechnic, quite a number of first-rated employers will wonder whether the more prestigious universities rejected them and hence misinterpret the candidate as being weak.

For those whose children are doing A-levels and looking to select university places please help your children to choose wisely. A university that has low grade entry requirements or does not have its own internal exam should make you weary.

Work Experience

I cannot stress it enough but relevant work experience in the field you child wants to go into is vital even if it is for only 2 or 3 weeks, the more relevant the experience, the better. I stress the word RELEVANT.

There is nothing wrong with your child working at the local sports shop on Saturdays for pocket money but this should not form the bulk of their work experience profile.

If your child wants to be a doctor, speak to your GP about working at the surgery or doing voluntary work at the local hospital. If finance is your child's focus, search

if at first you don't succeed, try and try again.

for work placements and ask around friends/family for work experience.

Examples of Relevant Work Experience

17yrs old, wants to pursue a career in Finance; predicted A level grades - straight A's, has a provisional offer to study Economics at Warwick university, applies for the scholarship programme at Deloitte. This will provide a



COMPONENTS OF THE PERFECT CV CONTINUED

unique opportunity to combine taking a gap year with invaluable **paid** business experience. Not to mention the bonus of ongoing financial scholarship throughout university.

designers and helped organize collection for London fashion week. Has made loads of contacts and has secured work experience next year in New York.

ence) with Guardian newspaper. An interview he conducted got published in the main paper. They have encouraged him to pitch and write ideas on a freelance basis.



18yrs old, Fashion with Management degree, Manchester University student spent this summer working for new upcoming fashion

19yrs old, English degree, Bristol University student, wants to get into journalism, did 2 weeks internship (paid experi-

It can be tough for your child to get the right work experience but if at first you don't succeed, try and try again.

To contribute an article to the next issue of The Smart Kid send your email to info@thesmartkid.org

READERS' CORNER

Just to let you know that I found this issue very informative. A few things that were quite useful to me were:

Average point score per pupil
Value added results

The league table has always played a very important role to me, in deciding the school my kids attend. Now, I am better equipped as I never used to pay any attention to the above.

Until about a week ago, a teacher friend of mine informed me that I needed to check the GCSE grades A* - C, which included English and Maths. For me and I'm sure a lot of others, English and Maths is very important. Amazingly, some of the schools that I thought did well turned out not so good after taking English and Mathematics into account. Luckily, you have reiterated the fact again.

You might want to consider tests for Grammar schools in one of your future issues. Keep up the good work.

- *Kike A*

Our web address is:

www.thesmartkid.org

and

Our new email address is:

info@thesmartkid.org

My mum gave me a print out of Volume 1 Issue 5 "Is setting working for your child" and I found the material both insightful and helpful. As a direct result I am setting up a meeting with my son's teacher to discuss his setting placement for maths.

I think the work you are trying to do is fantastic and would like to be sent the issues that I have missed and all subsequent material from this point on.

- *Lawrence T*

Thanks for getting in touch. I also sent the newsletter to about another 10 people yesterday. You have really filled the void/niche for people talking about this very issue but not taking a big enough step to share. With your newsletter and

reader contributions it should soon become quite global and cover issues such as why parents choose to send their children to their motherlands for schooling, choices, conditions etc.

- *Ann-Marie C*

Thanks for these issues of smart kid; very helpful. I pray that God will continue to inspire you as you alleviate the fears of most black parents. These children are our future generation and we need the divine wisdom of God to get them to the potential that God intended for them.

I hope to continue to receive more issues.

- *Sope O*

To receive future copies of this free newsletter send an email to info@thesmartkid.org

CODE CRACKER

Work Experience at Secondary Level



Work experience is offered on the national curriculum for students in **Years 10 and 11 in the UK**; every student has a statutory right to take work experience if he or she wishes. Work experience in this context is when students in an adult working environment more or less act as an employee, but with the emphasis on learning about the world of work. Placements are limited by safety and security restrictions, insurance cover and availability, and do not necessarily reflect eventual career choice but instead allow a broad experience of the world of work.

If a student fails to find a placement then he or she may sometimes be forced to attend school everyday, aiding the caretaker for example, or helping out elsewhere in the school, such as with language and PE departments, or with ICT technicians.

Most students do not get paid for their time doing work experience, as this is considered part of their education. The vast majority of students will go out on work experience for one or two weeks in a year, while some students will work in a particular workplace perhaps one or two days a week for



extended periods of time throughout the year, either for vocation reasons and commitment to alternative curricula or because they have social and/or behavioural problems.



Internships and University Level Work Experience

An **intern** is one who works in a temporary position with an emphasis on on-the-job training rather than merely employment, making it similar to an apprenticeship. Interns are usually university students between the second and final years of an undergraduate degree course, especially in the science, engineering and computing fields. However they can also be post graduate students seeking skills for a new career.



Student internships provide opportunities for students to gain experience in their field, determine if they have an interest in a particular career and create a network of contacts. Students on work placement have the opportunity to use the skills and knowledge gained in their first two years and see how they are applied to real world problems. This then can offer them useful insights for their final year and prepares them for the job market once their course

has finished.

An internship may be paid, unpaid or partially paid (in the form of a stipend). Paid internships are most common in the medical, science, engineering, law, business (especially accounting and finance), technology and advertising fields. Internships in not-for-profit organizations such as charities and think tanks are often unpaid, volunteer positions. Internships may be part-time or full-time; typically they are part-time during the university year and full-time in the summer, and they typically last 6-12 weeks, but can be shorter or longer.



Internships provide the employers with cheap or free labour for (typically) low-level tasks, and also the prospect of interns returning to the company after completing their education and requiring little or no training. Some companies also have the means to sponsor students in their final year at University and/or promise a job at the end of the course. This can act as an incentive for the student to perform well during the placement as helps with two otherwise unwelcome stresses: the lack of money in the final year, and finding a job for when the University course completes.



To contribute an article to the next issue of The Smart Kid send your email to info@thesmartkid.org

The Smart Kid is an organisation formed to empower 21st century parents in the UK by sharing vital information and motivating them to take positive action for their children. We expect that the parents who contact us will go on to share the information with their peers, friends and family thus empowering one another. These gradual but consistent efforts will produce a shift in the culture and value system in the UK. Our vision is that previously untapped ability, lying dormant in a sizeable proportion of the population, will be discovered thus creating a more productive society where the best opportunities are no longer restricted to the realm of a select few. Thanks for taking the time to read this and we hope you share our dream for all children in the UK.

The



Smart

Kid

To receive future copies of this free newsletter send an email to info@thesmartkid.org