

TITLE:

Regent College: SoapBox and The Global Citizens' College

DATE:

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SUMMARY

Regent College wanted to provide its students with a learning experience which broadened their views and horizons.

It has offered courses on active citizenship since 2004, but in 2006/7 it chose to become a Global Citizens College (GCC) and now delivers a regular programme of Soapbox events where students debate hot topics.

INSTITUTION PROFILE

General FE College
1800 F/T Students
4000 P/T Students

EAUC COMMENT

This is an excellent example of how a college can use an existing programme such as the Global Citizens' College initiative to enthuse their own students.

THE PROBLEM

Regent College believes in setting high standards and valuing equality and diversity. It wanted a recognised and high-profile way to embed these beliefs across the college. It also wanted a structure to pull together a number of other initiatives – volunteering, a campaign to increase literacy and pastoral work. Becoming a Global Citizen's College was how Regent College chose to achieve this.

The college also wanted as many students as possible to be involved and to be able to understand and discuss global issues. Although it could have integrated these themes into the taught curriculum, Regent College wanted a novel way to engage the students which would inspire them and stimulate debate.

Using external speakers to stimulate debate is the main way the college chose to do this. The events – known as 'Soapbox' events – have featured people such as Sir Bernard Crick on Citizenship, Professor Steve Jones on the genetics debate and Brendan Batson from the FA on racism in football.

THE APPROACH

The college has offered courses on active citizenship since 2004 and becoming a Global Citizens' college was a natural next step.

The college wanted to develop a forum for debate for its students, other students in the local community and opinion formers and idea-makers. Soapbox events are how it tackled this.

The college invites an external speaker to address the Soapbox. The students then have an open discussion about the topic. The events are held after college, and students are expected to attend at least four each term.

Active citizenship is linked to the curriculum through an extended studies programme which all Level 3 students – along with some Level 1 and 2 students – are automatically enrolled on.

The Soapbox brand is being extended as Regent College is in discussion with other colleges and has promoted the idea to its overseas partners in Strasbourg and New York.

GOALS

- Create a structured way of integrating Active Citizenship into the curriculum
- Involve students in the delivery of the theme through suggesting topics for Soapbox debates
- Build on students' interests and motivation, giving them real-life examples of how the theory is applied in practise
- Provide accredited outcomes

OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

Obstacles

- Involving all students – only about half have attended any soapbox events
- Securing quality speakers for the soapbox events – which will help with attendance
- Financing the project

Solutions

- Make the programme interesting and relevant to students so they want to come
Plan in advance and release information early so students put dates in their diaries
- Speakers aren't paid, so the college appeals to their good nature and this year are doing much planning in advance to work around the speakers' other commitments
- The college are currently investigating sponsorship opportunities to help fund the project and can expand it

PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

- Since September 2006, Regent College has run approximately 40 events.
- Around 700 students have been enrolled on Extended Studies subjects, with around 400 receiving a qualification.
- Around 500 students have attended a Soapbox session in the last 18 months.
- Topics for the Soapboxes have been as diverse as euthanasia, religion, the death penalty, nuclear weapons, Palestine and racism in football.
- 18 months in, the college feels the activity is embedded across the institution.

LESSONS LEARNT

- Prepare well, but expect to make mistakes at the start – it's going to be trial and error.
- Make sure you have a good team in place who know what they need to do and why.
- Begin the story with students early and prepare your argument to convince them early on.
- Ensure you plan the programme ahead.
- Make sure the events are scheduled at a time when you can maximise audience.

FURTHER INFORMATION

More information on the Global Citizens College
www.regent-college.ac.uk/index.php?chapter=courses.list&cat=357&&
www.lseducation.org.uk/programmes/portal.aspx?ProgID=15

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