



IDPE online regional meet-ups

Last week we started running a series of online regional meet-ups as an opportunity to share current challenges and ideas, and to connect with the wider IDPE community. The members we spoke to were all in different circumstances, from those new in post, to those about to launch their next capital campaign, from those with giving days planned, to those looking to develop their legacy society or events programmes.

The focus of the meet-ups was to discuss how everyone is adapting to these unprecedented circumstances, working from home, managing teams remotely, fundraising on hold, and events until the end of June cancelled. However, despite this, the discussions did demonstrate that there were real opportunities at this time. Below is a summary of the ideas shared so far:

Engagement

- It's the perfect time to focus on engagement with your community.
- Identify vulnerable alumni, get in touch with those who are the most engaged, let them know what the school is doing and what your future plans are – it's not about making 'an ask' but one school, as a result of such calls, had conversations with alumni about a legacy and received a pledge to a campaign they felt passionate about.
- If you are new in post, this is an opportunity to introduce yourself.
- Involve pupils? Do this with caution if pupils are making calls – how will they cope on a potentially 'difficult' call? Will they give out the right messages? Could your pupils be involved in other ways? Could they write to vulnerable alumni?
- Promote how the school community (and your alumni) are getting involved in supporting the wider community in light of the pandemic.
- Send a letter from the head, handwritten postcards from the school, etc. to connect to your community.
- Run virtual book clubs through alumni engagement platforms.
- Offer mentoring support to alumni who are due to graduate this year.
- Engage with year 13 leavers to ensure they sign up to your engagement platform/you have their details for your database.

As one member said, this is an opportunity to give everyone a 'warm and fuzzy feeling' about your school's community!

Fundraising

- All members said that fundraising was on hold – they felt there were other causes that were more worthwhile at present, and that they would feel uncomfortable asking for support.
- Some members were considering some low-level bursary fundraising in the future, focusing on requesting support for existing pupils whose families may be affected financially as a direct result of the pandemic.
- Schools are currently sending out letters for fees, with many offering reduced fees (with an online teaching offering), and asking families who can afford to, to contribute to a ‘hardship fund’ for families affected by the pandemic.

Other ideas for now:

- Some members were trialling virtual events, finding their way with small groups online, or enjoying staff quiz nights – if you have already started to offer virtual events, please get in touch as members would be keen to learn more about what works.
- Keep celebrating the impact of development at your school – so much more than just about fundraising, you just need to look at all the engagement that is going on above.
- Use this time to plan.

Keep in touch with IDPE (it’s business as usual), check into the [members’ forum](#) and keep an eye on our [website](#) for coronavirus related news, support and ideas from the IDPE community.

Don’t forget if you or your colleagues have been furloughed then you can still keep in touch with the IDPE community, just get in touch with info@idpe.org.uk, tell us your personal email address and give us consent to keep you informed.

As one member said ‘...we will be remembered for how we behave now...’. Remember this is a temporary and unprecedented set of circumstances, we are all finding our way, and it’s important to prioritise and be realistic on what you can achieve.