



## Parent Engagement

An effective way to share Dr. Ruby Payne's ideas with parents

Imagine a school community where everyone, including the parents, has the same understanding of economic class issues. *Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-by World* was written for people in poverty. It provides an opportunity to examine the impact that poverty has on them, and their communities. It also provides access to the information found in *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*—the same information that the teachers and school personnel get from that book and the workshops of the same name. School personnel and parents both will benefit when they have a common language to talk about relationships and achievement.

The aim is to provide a safe, agenda-free learning environment where parents can reflect on and examine their lives, investigate new information that is relevant to them, assess their own resources, make plans for their own future stories, offer ideas for school and community improvement, and choose a team to help them fulfill their dreams. Several studies document the positive changes made by participants. For example, *of the 312 people in Youngstown, Ohio, who participated in one study, full-time employment rose from 31% to 76% and 38% of them went on to postsecondary education*. For most parents, these achievements help stabilize their lives, which in turn impacts the lives of their children. One can reasonably argue that such stabilization can have a positive impact on the students' lives and thus impact their performance in school.

How to get started:

1. Send staff members who want to facilitate Getting Ahead to A Framework for Understanding Poverty or Bridges Out of Poverty workshop or watch a DVD of either of those workshops.
2. Have potential facilitators read the Facilitator Notes and attend a Getting Ahead Facilitator Training or watch the 8-Session Webinar DVD.
3. Or utilize a Getting Ahead Facilitator from another organization, if there is a facilitator in your community (check with your local social service providers).

Run Getting Ahead workgroups:

1. Establish a budget for Getting Ahead. Estimate \$8,000 for a group of 12.
2. Recruit parents with technical support from aha! Process.
3. Conduct the Getting Ahead workgroup – 20 session, 2.5 hours per session.
4. Work with local community to support parents who complete Getting Ahead with a plan to build their resources.

Follow-up with parents:

- Invite parents to participate in school/student/community activities at all levels including planning and decision making.

Potential outcomes:

- Parents work toward a more stable situation.
- Better communications between school personnel and parents who understand the hidden rules of class.
- School personnel and parents come together to solve problems.
- Parents are invested in building resources.
- Parents want to build social capital for themselves and their children.
- Parents will support and value education.

Support

- Consultation with Philip DeVol, author of Getting Ahead
- Support from the Getting Ahead community of practice: [www.gettingaheadnetwork.com](http://www.gettingaheadnetwork.com)