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David Walsh

Talking the talk

A recruitment professional explains how he tries to help youngsters tackle that important job interview.

“Inspiring” – that is the word used by one employment professional to describe many of the 15-year-old students he has interviewed in Croydon’s secondary schools.

David Walsh, principal of Select Appointments, in George Street, is one of a team of business people from across the borough who gives up his time to conduct mock job interviews for Croydon Education Business Partnership (CEBP).

“I asked him to explain and he became quite animated. I asked if he had considered catering as a career – he said he hadn’t, but he would now.

“I am regularly inspired by the ambition, determination and sheer grit of some students, many of whom get no credit for the significant contributions they make at home.

“As a result, we sometimes miss the increasingly important soft skills they are acquiring,

“I can remind students they will be selling themselves to a potential employer.”

“I interview adults for a living,” says David, “and, in many ways, the requirements from student and job-seeker are the same – good preparation, attention to detail with the CV, and the all-important covering letter.

“And I pay particular attention to spelling and format.

“I like the covering letter to include something of interest – not favourite football teams or shopping trips; details of a Duke of Edinburgh’s award or a five-kilometre charity run tell me something important about the interviewee’s attitude to life.

“Such details may also suggest a private passion that is not otherwise evident.

“I remember one relatively ordinary interview with a male student that came alive because he had included a line about cooking at home.

many of which could be invaluable in a competitive job market.”

David has been to six interview sessions at schools across the borough and he is happy to continue doing so, and to involve one of his colleagues.

Asked why he volunteered, he says:

“Before I became my own boss I had the good fortune to work for a number of blue-chip companies where I was well trained in interviewing and staff management techniques.

“I felt I could offer those skills to the community in which I now make my living.

“I can remind students they will be selling themselves to a potential employer in a market where there are maybe four or five others competing for the same job.”

Among the schools David has visited is



Valuable: mock interviews give young people an idea of what they may face in the job market

Archbishop Tenison’s in central Croydon, where interviews are conducted in the school hall.

The students arrive in batches – all smartly dressed, some more appropriately than others, and all taking the exercise seriously.

Laura Mapstone, the school’s acting head of careers, says: “The mock interviews are part of the way in which we prepare students for the world of work, and we’re grateful to the business people who give their time to make the interviews possible.

“In many cases they’re echoing advice we

have given to students previously, but it carries much more weight when it comes from someone

outside the school community.”

For more details of how you can help to prepare

students for job interviews, please contact Tony Slonecki at CEBP on **020 8395 3322**.

Participating schools and colleges – 2008/09

Addington High School	Riddlesdown High School
Archbishop Tenison’s C of E High School	Norbury Manor Business & Enterprise College
Ashburton Community School	Old Palace School of John Whitgift
The Brit School	St Joseph’s College
Coloma Convent School	St Mary’s Catholic High School
Cotelands Pupil Referral Unit	Virgo Fidelis Convent School
Croydon College	Westwood Language College for Girls
Edenham High School	Woodcote High School
John Ruskin College	