

# UNLOCK THE POWER OF PARENT-TEACHER PARTNERSHIPS FOR INCLUSIVE LEARNING

## DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

You are invited to consider the following scenario:

*You are a regular teacher at a local school. You have recently received a [diary entry](#) from the parent of one of your new students, who has expressed their frustration and disappointment at not being heard at school so far. The parent's child has special education needs, and they feel that their concerns and opinions are being ignored by the school staff. As the teacher of this student, you are about to meet with the parent to discuss their concerns and to work together to build a new relationship that is based on mutual respect and understanding.*

Please note that the layout of the diary entry may appear confusing, but this is intentional. We want you to experience the same sense of frustration that a parent may feel when trying to navigate a complex and overwhelming school situation.

As you read the diary entry, try to put yourself in the shoes of a parent who feels unheard and frustrated. Imagine what thoughts and emotions may be going through their mind as they write this entry.

The main questions you need to consider for the final activity are provided below in a format that includes before, during, and after the meeting.

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## GETTING READY FOR THE MEETING

Reflect on the following questions and explain your answer.

Question	Answer & Explanation
What is the purpose of the meeting? Who is present and why?	The purpose of the meeting is to create a relationship of collaboration, trust and communication between the child's parents and the teacher. The meeting is attended by: the teacher, the child and his parents.
What type of collaboration will you try to achieve? What's your vision?	I propose a weekly collaboration, based on dialogue and cooperation, which will facilitate the exchange of ideas between both parties, announcing the most important aspects of a problem. Some aspects may be known, others may be new, appearing along the way. This partnership would make it possible to complement the strengths of each side while also generating new ideas. Moreover, a more extensive analysis of a problem that arose along the way would be possible and may highlight aspects that neither the parents nor I, the teacher, would have thought of.
How do you ensure that parents have the opportunity to prepare? What communication do you have beforehand?? What preparatory question(s) do you give?	I inform the child's parents that I want to have a close collaborative relationship in order to find truly constructive solutions for the child's progress and I invite them to a preparatory discussion through which they share my history and family background, which could help me in the future planning of some activities. I will also prepare them by telling them that the presence of both parents, who can each have their own proposals, is necessary, but also the presence of the child in order to show him strong confidence in a school-family collaboration and their support, as a team.
How do you decide on the time and location of the meeting? How do you ensure that the meeting can take place in a safe and confidential atmosphere?	In order to show my availability and capture the trust of the parents, I would adapt the time of the meeting according to the family's schedule, but I would propose that the meeting place be the school, in order to show the child that the school environment can be one in which his family and he come with confidence and hope, keeping the discussions and subsequent activities confidential. We will decide the subsequent schedule of meetings or joint activities together, depending on the parents' schedule, the school schedule and the child's availability.
What plans do you have in place to provide the parents with frameworks to encourage their involvement?	First, I will ask the parents to tell me what are the child's favorite activities with them, what are his strengths and what makes him happy, and starting from these, we will create together an activity plan that could be carried out at school, but adapted to the curriculum that the child has to follow. Such planning, adapted to the child's needs, through team work with the family, can only bring progress, confidence in success. We will also create a plan together so that the school activities can be completed at home, in the child's family environment.

What digital technologies are available to assist with cooperative projects and simplify communication with parents? How would you go about introducing these tools to the parents?

First of all, I will use those digital technologies, which the child's parents have mastered or if they have these possibilities. I will initially propose some easy and accessible to everyone, starting with filming the child at home, especially when he is successful in solving family or school tasks, online meetings together from home, from the child's environment, simple online games, which the child goes through them completing some activities, adapted interactive worksheets, online exhibitions with the child's works. I will later propose, after going through some stages of collaboration and communication, for example, the creation of an online book (book creator) with moments from the student's activities that we can watch together.

The digital technologies that a teacher can use are diverse and can be adapted to each individual activity.



## DURING THE MEETING

Reflect on the following questions and explain your answer.

Question	Answer & Explanation
<p>How do you start the conversation? (consider your own body language) Where is everyone seated? In what ways are you fostering a friendly atmosphere during the meeting?</p>	<p>I think I would organize the meeting in the child's family classroom, and I would sit like a student, on the bench. I would let the child sit where he wanted, even at the chair, and I would make him start the conversation. For example, let him introduce me to his parents... With pedagogic tact, I would let the parents speak freely, to present their frustrations, their concerns, the problems they think their child has with the school staff and which they think could be the solutions to solve them. I will request a brief history of the child, what he is good at, what failures he has, how he overcomes them, so that we ourselves know how to overcome them when they appear in the school program. I will lead the discussion towards the availability of parents to be involved in school activities that strengthen a closer relationship between school and family and finally I would propose the realization of a plan of activities that we can do together to overcome some barriers...</p>
<p>What are the crucial things that should be communicated from your perspective and from the parents' perspective? How can you promote this exchange of information?</p>	<p>First, I will let the parents tell me a short history of the child, what he is good at, what failures he has, how he overcomes them, so that we ourselves, the teachers, know how to overcome them when they appear in the school program. I will lead the discussion towards the availability of parents to be involved in school activities that strengthen a closer relationship between school and family. Finally, I would propose the realization of a plan of activities that we can do together to overcome some barriers..., a plan that to follow the school curriculum, but which we can adapt together in order to visibly record progress.  I would also request the planning of weekly meetings, through which, in addition to communicating some of the student's results from the week in question, we will carry out activities together. to continue the activities of the respective week. I would also suggest the use of technology (depending on their possibilities), short recordings, online meetings (depending on their schedule).</p>
<p>What do you focus on during the meeting? How do you ensure that the conversation stays focused on the goals?</p>	<p>During the meeting, I make sure that both the parents and the present child can honestly express their emotions, they can freely say what they think, what proposals they have for solving the problems. I would also continuously ask for the child's opinion (for example on the technology to use, what games he likes, if he wants to be filmed or be a "character" in the book we want to make about him). In this way, I would demonstrate to the parents that the child's opinion matters to me and the other teachers.</p>

	<p>I would also clearly explain to the parents that the child has to achieve the curriculum of the class and that he cannot be left behind and that all possibilities, knowledge and skills of the student must be found and exploited to the maximum in order to achieve the objectives and observe a visible progress. We cannot focus only on what the child knows, although this aspect is very important, but on how he can evolve and what he can learn further, adapting ourselves to "how" the child can, involving him in various activities with his peers class, in teams, in pairs to increase his confidence in himself and in his possibilities. School inclusion also means belonging to a group, to which the child should adapt. Only together, child with children, child with parents, child with teachers can we achieve this. School work must also be completed at home, for the benefit all. Communication must exist and parents have their role in the child's success.</p>
<p>How can you ensure that your vision for inclusion is aligned with the feelings, the needs and expectations of the parents?</p>	<p>In order to understand the parents' expectations, we must let them freely express their own points of view, and if some of them do not conform to the teacher's vision, a middle way must be found, through which both one and the other feel that s/he found an ideal solution, starting from the solutions proposed by them, but adapted both to the child and to the group of students in which the inclusion is done. Parents must understand that both their child matters, but also the other children in the collective, who must not perceive the new colleague as "problematic".</p>
<p>How do you end the conversation?</p>	<p>After such a meeting, parents must leave confident that the plans made are for the benefit of the child, but also that they cannot be just spectators and that they must make a clear contribution to the child's academic success and that "work in a team" it is important for everyone.</p> <p>I would also end the conversation with the child and emphasize his "wishes" for the future in the joint plans between me and the parents.</p> <p>I would suggest some further activities for the child to do together with me and then continue at home. I would start such an activity at the moment (depending on the moment, the child, the schedule) and I would give him the task for immediate home, so as not to have the feeling that he has "lost the day". And parents could thus understand how they can it also involves how they can solve "what seemed like a problem at the beginning of the conversation".</p> <p>It is certain that a lot of pedagogic tact, dedication, understanding, respect and ... above all, "availability" on the part of everyone is needed.</p>

## AFTER THE MEETING

Reflect on the following questions and explain.

Question	Answer & Explanation
<p>How are you planning to follow up after the meeting? How do you ensure that the parent can still be involved after the meeting?</p>	<p>The need for a task for parents at home, immediate, I think would be a good thing, because by carrying out the given task, you can see if the parents want to get involved and how they get involved. And the way they will present the results of the given activity will show if they are willing to a true collaboration, communication and sharing of new, future ideas, and I will leave this method of transmission to the discretion of the parents. If they participate in the proposed weekly meetings, I will ask them to propose activities that we can do together, methods and solutions that they have experienced so far.</p>
<p>How are you planning to evaluate the partnership effort and keep a record of the outcomes considering the following question: What impacts, effects or consequences has the partnership had for the student?</p>	<p>I will also propose to them a journal of observations, as I also have at the weekly meetings we plan, to compare them, to present them in parallel and possibly to find new effective teaching/learning methods for the child. I will try to convey to the parents often, through various technologies, the positive results and the student's achievements, but also what should be improved and I inform the parents that I have the same expectations from them, to convey whenever I can or feel the need to share with the teacher of successes or failures.</p> <p>The impact of such collaboration and "work behind the scenes in a team" on the student will be visible, especially for him, because if he feels that he has several partners with him in solving tasks or problems, it only increases his confidence in itself, in its own potential and thus to exceed its limits.</p>
<p>What does the reporting look like after the parent-teacher meeting?</p>	<p>At the end of such a meeting, all participants should be satisfied with how it went and plans made for future meetings.</p> <p>After the discussions, the teacher can realize if the parents have understood each other and if the feedback has been carried out successfully. If the teacher notices that the parents still have doubts after such a meeting, new meetings are absolutely necessary, through which he can demonstrate his willingness to work in a team with them.</p>

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