

UNLOCK THE POWER OF PARENT-TEACHER PARTNERSHIPS FOR INCLUSIVE LEARNING

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

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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.

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?	<p>The purpose of the meeting is to mend a broken spirit. In this case, Robbe's mother is broken as she does not have enough support from the school to help her son's progress. She feels desperate as she feels that her child is not progressing as he should do.</p> <p>In the meeting five persons are present: Robbe's mum, two Robbe's regular teachers (I am one of them), the Special Needs' teacher and the Principal.</p>



	<p>The main point of the meeting is to decide if Robbe should move to a Special Needs School or if he could stay at the school he is now.</p> <p>We want to show the importance of parent-teacher partnership.</p>
<p>What type of collaboration will you try to achieve? What's your vision?</p>	<p>My vision (I am one of the regular teachers) is that the Universal Design of Learning-UDL approach is feasible in our situation and we need to collaborate with the parents. Parents need to have a say, express their fears and their expectations and then, collaborate with the educators.</p>
<p>How do you ensure that parents have the opportunity to prepare? What communication do you have beforehand?? What preparatory question(s) do you give?</p>	<p>To prepare the meeting I have contacted Robbe's mother by means of an email, first, and then, by means of a phone call. In this direct communication, I have tried to calm her because she is quite anxious and stressed because she knows the possibility of sending her child to another school. I learn that Robbe's father is absent, and she is alone in her struggle for an education for her son. Robbie is her only child. She tells me that she is willing to have a meeting to discuss the situation.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>I suggest Robbe's mother three slots for the meeting at school and she decides when we can meet. Friday at 10:00 will be fine for her. I inform the other teachers and the Principal.</p> <p>For the meeting, I choose the school library, a bright, colorful and nice place, with lots of children's drawing on the walls. Robbie's drawings are visible. At that time, the library is empty and we can sit round a table the five of us.</p>
<p>What plans do you have in place to provide the parents with frameworks to encourage their involvement?</p>	<p>The Special Needs' teacher has prepared with me some questions for the mother: which are her fears, expectations, what kind of activities Robbe usually does at home, if he goes to a therapist, if she has some help from relatives, friends or neighbours...</p> <p>We have prepared, as well, some guidelines and suggestions. If Robbe finally stays at our school, her mother and the teachers have to work as good partners and develop similar strategies at school and at home. If finally Robbe goes to a Special Needs' School, her mother should be carefully informed and guided.</p> <p>In order to encourage her involvement, I should establish an online meeting/phone call every week to update her son's progress.</p>

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?

Educational platforms are excellent ways to assist with cooperation and communication with parents. These platforms can be easily used from a mobile and are friendly and intuitive. We should avoid overuse and invasion of privacy, though. A phone call can be a very good way to talk when we need to inform about something or just to keep contact.



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>The five of us are sitting at a round table in the school library: a bright space, nothing on the table... We have to feel relaxed. The children's drawings can be seen on the walls. Next to the round table there is a small table with Robbe's handbooks. We will show them to her mum if necessary.</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>I start the meeting introducing all the participants and telling what the purpose is. The main point of the meeting is to decide if Robbe should move to a Special Needs School or if he could stay at the school he is now.</p> <p>As I am for Robbe staying at school, I explain the reasons why I consider we can offer him help and support, and adapt the curriculum to his slight impairment.</p> <p>The other regular teacher explains why she is for Robbe going to another school, as from her opinion, other pupils progress is affected.</p> <p>The principal tells Robbe's mum that the school wants the best for him and that we all want to help him.</p> <p>Robbe's mother explains how she feels, how is her life with Robbe outside the school. She expresses her expectations and tells how she can support her son's progress at school.</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 would focus on the goals that Robbe can achieve, rather than on his difficulties. I would insist on 4 aspects, those of the Circle of Courage, as we have learnt.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Belonging: Robbe needs to feel part of a group and this sense of belonging is clear at his school nowadays. 2. Mastery: Robbe is proud of new skills that have acquired recently. That is another reason why he should stay with his classmates and teachers. 3. Independence: Despite his problems, Robbe feels more autonomous day by day. 4. Generosity: Robbe shows affection towards his peers and teachers and seeks for love and affection from them. <p>Robbe can develop new skills and improve in many social competences that will help him to learn to learn.</p>



	<p>Diversity thinking seeks Robbe as having multiple aspects, where limitations are part of their identity. Classroom climate is created to foster a sense of belonging and differences are seen as an added value. Parents are recognized as valuable contributors. Teachers need support in finding solutions to work with special needs students.</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>During the meeting we look at each other, we listen carefully and try to understand each other's perspective.</p> <p>The teachers and the principal give a realistic point of view but with a warm approach. Pupils at school have no problems with Robbe integration and they consider him a nice buddy. Other parents will be informed about the situation and we be asked to be key element in Robbe's inclusion at school.</p>
<p>How do you end the conversation?</p>	<p>After sharing our thoughts and feelings, I end the conversation telling Robbe's mum that we will implement some measures to improve Robbe's results and that we have some months to decide what to do. The Special Needs' teacher will dedicate some more time to Robbe. I will contact her every week.</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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a weekly online meeting/phone call meeting. • Robbe's mum will contact me any time she needs. • Robbe's mum will write down her son's achievements at home. <p>As we have learnt with Epstein's <i>Framework of Six Types of Involvement</i>, we can keep parent's involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parenting: Assisting families in understanding child development and in setting conditions to learn. - Communicating: Designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication. - Volunteering: Counting on parents as an audience for student activities. - Learning at home: Helping students at home with homework and other curriculum activities. - Decision making: Including parents in school decisions. - Collaborating with the community: Integrating community services and resources into the educational process.
<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>On a diary, I will keep track of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robbe's results. • The meetings with other teachers and the principal. • The meetings, phone calls with Robbe's mum. <p>Now, we have a clear understanding of what inclusive education is and why collaboration with parents is so important for supporting Robbe's learning and success.</p>
<p>What does the reporting look like after the parent-teacher meeting?</p>	<p>The report is clear and neat. It is focused on the solutions and on the implementation of measures to help Robbe.</p>