

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
<p>What is the purpose of the meeting? Who is present and why?</p>	<p>The purpose of the meeting is to find out concerns and expectations of parents and to lay the foundations for establishing a partnership between parents and the school. The teacher and the parents are present at the meeting so that they could bond first.</p>
<p>What type of collaboration will you try to achieve? What's your vision?</p>	<p>I will try to achieve type one of collaboration, parenting. I can achieve this by listening and hearing what parents are saying, by validating their feelings, by showing interest for family dynamics, student behavior and routine at home, and by involving parents in the child's education. A parent support group can also be organized.</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>At least a week before the meeting, I would announce it to the parents by phone and explain its topic and purpose. Considering purpose of the meeting, I would invite parents to think about the following questions: <i>What makes you feel involved as a parent?, Which communication channel works best for you as a parent?, What time works best for you as a parent in terms of communication?, What are your expectations as a parent towards me as a teacher?, How do you as a parent see that your child is happy?, How do you notice that your child feels safe with someone (new)?, What activities does your child enjoy doing?, What signals do you recognize that your child is "stressed"? What helps him to relax?, What is the obstacle that your child is facing? What have you learned that can help with this? Are my actions as a teacher in line with your inclusion vision?, What would you like to see done differently?.</i> Later, these questions will be framework for conversation.</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 would ask the parents what time suits them best and I would try to adjust my time as much as possible. I would talk to parents alone, at school, in a comfortable room where there is peace and no one disturbs us. I would also ensure enough time and not rush the parents.</p>
<p>What plans do you have in place to provide the parents with frameworks to encourage their involvement?</p>	<p>I would show interest in family dynamics, child's responsibilities, habits and routine at home. I would compare them with obligations, habits and routine in school and agree with the parents on ways to harmonize them. I would ask the parents to regularly exchange information about the child's functioning at home and at school in order to spot potential difficulties in time and work on improvement. Achievements at home and at school would be monitored using a pre-arranged rubric, which would enable parents to be actively involved and</p>

	contribute to the monitoring and improvement of the child's education.
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?	For faster and easier communication, I would suggest parents a phone conversation, communication via video call, e-mail and viber communication channel. I would ask the parents which communication channels they are familiar with, which have been used so far and which have proven useful to them. Eventually, I would introduce tools they are not familiar with and we would together agree on the most acceptable method of communication for them.



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 start the meeting by welcoming and greeting the parents, shaking hands and informal conversation (eg. <i>How are you? How did you travel? Did you come straight from work?</i> etc.). We are sitting at a round table so that we are facing each other. When everyone is seated, I repeat why we have gathered and what is the purpose of the meeting. I foster a friendly atmosphere by turning to the parent who is speaking, establishing and maintaining eye contact, not crossing my arms, nodding to let them know that I hear what they are saying, paraphrasing and summarizing their words, repeating what they said and checking if I understood correctly. I wait for the parent to finish the sentence and don't interrupt, and I expect the same from them.</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>The crucial things that should be communicated from my perspective are my expectations and the way I work at school, what I expect from child, what from parents, and what I can offer myself. Parents should clearly state what they expect the child to achieve, what their short-term and long-term goals are, what they expect from me as a teacher, how they see the child's education so far, what they are satisfied with, what has shown good results, what the child responds well to, what difficulties they have encountered so far and how they respond to them. During the conversation, it should be emphasized that our common goal is achievement and well-being of the child.</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 conversation, I focus on what parents say, but also on their non-verbal communication. If verbal and non-verbal communication are not in harmony, I reflect the parental emotions and look for confirmation if I understand correctly what they are saying. If the conversation gets off the topic, I remind parents what the purpose of this particular meeting is and I leave the possibility of an additional meeting with another topic if the parents show interest or need. The framework for the conversation are the preparatory questions that were previously given to the parents.</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>Alignment between parents and school can be achieved by two-way and open communication in which each party will describe their feelings, needs and expectations. It is possible that feelings, needs and expectations of parents and school are not aligned and it is possible that the parents are not immediately ready to cooperate due to a previous negative experience with the system. Therefore, it is important to remain calm, positive, clearly state what the school can offer and where the boundaries are, focus on common interests and expectations and build a relationship on them. From time to time I ask parents</p>

	how they heard what I said in order to check their understanding and avoid misunderstanding.
How do you end the conversation?	I end the meeting by summarizing the most important conclusions and what was agreed upon. I ask the parents if all the information has been said and if they want to add anything else. If necessary, I ask the parents to repeat what was agreed in order to avoid misunderstanding. We agree on the time and way of communication for next conversation or meeting.



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>After the meeting, I plan to stay in contact with parents so that together we can monitor child's progress and achieve what was agreed. Through regular communication and agreement, parents remain involved in child's education process. Also, I will inform parents about progress and positive developments rather than only about difficulties or what child cannot do.</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 have an open file for child which I regularly update. It contains the initial state, medical history, what child achieved so far, his strengths and agreed goals. I record what was planned that child should achieve in a certain period of time, so it can be compared what of the planned was achieved, at what pace and what can be changed or improved in the future. The file also describes cooperation with parents, so the progress and work of child can be monitored before and during the partnership with parents.</p> <p>Partnership can be monitored and evaluated by the table with two columns that are filled at the beginning and at the end of semester/school year/agreed period. At the beginning teacher and parents write what was agreed and what they want to achieve and at the end of semester/school year/agreed period teacher and parents write in the next column what was actually achieved. Teacher and parents can use this information to analyze their partnership and plan future activities.</p>
<p>What does the reporting look like after the parent-teacher meeting?</p>	<p>After the meeting, I write official report of the meeting according to the previously agreed questions and framework. Report includes main conclusions and work plan with child and parents. I also inform the school principal about it. Report can also be delivered to the parents.</p>

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