

# 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 establish and outline the means, approaches, methods and strategies that would be of help and applied in the process of teaching the child with special needs as well as to define how to establish a purposeful and a high quality collaboration with the child's family (parents and/or carers) because this aspect is important for the educational process to be complete. The people present are the school psychologist, student consultants, teachers involved in the teaching of the child and the headmaster.
What type of collaboration will you try to achieve? What's your vision?	I will try to achieve an active parent- teacher, teacher-parent collaboration based on trust, understanding, empathy, respect, reliance, mutual support and cooperation with the goal(s) in mind. Communication I envision is transparent, agreed upon and sincere. My vision is to use this collaboration to achieve progress in the child's development, both emotional and educational, however slight it might be, as long as the progress is visible.
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 personally contact the parents and try to arrange a live meeting with them beforehand to get to know them, to let them know me and to establish the atmosphere of trust. I talk to them about their family, their life routines and personal interests of each family member, their jobs and what their concerns are about the child and themselves. I would ask questions such as What makes you feel involved as a parent? Who do you find a confidential person that we can also contact and invite to the meeting so that you feel more supported and confident? Which communication channel suits you best for our communication? What time suits you best?
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?	We carefully arrange time and location so that it suits both, the parents and the school staff via the communication channel the parents find most adequate. The place for the meeting must be in a non-threatening environment for the parents, it must be some pleasant space, perhaps the relaxation area in the school, with armchairs and sofas or a colourful classroom with flowers and plants and natural light. It must be stated to the parents that despite the lighthearted location the meeting is absolutely confidential.
What plans do you have in place to provide the parents with frameworks to encourage their involvement?	I talk to the parents how important and valuable their involvement in the process is. I express that it is of extreme value to know how they see their role in the process, the input they give about their family context, personal experiences they had had so far and views and the expertise they might have gained so far.

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?

There are social networks such as Whatsapp, Viber, Teams, Viva Engage, Google Meet and others where not only phone calls are available but also video conferences, texting, sending documents etc. is possible, not to mention emails which are still one option. I will give live tutorials at private meetings to teach parents how to use them and encourage them to use them. There are also tutorials about the digital assistive technologies for supporting SEN students, those that assist with various difficulties (reading, hearing, speaking etc.), that parents and teachers can apply both at home and at school so that the child gets the full support and that both sides are synchronized in the effort because the child can progress faster and has the same approach.



## 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 a conversation with calling the parents by their names, using warm handshake and asking about how their family are, what their day was like and what they are looking forward to after the meeting. I look the parents in the eyes, smile, turn my body towards them, sitting leaning slightly backwards with my hands relaxed by the body. Everybody is seated in a circle to ensure the feeling of equality. I try to keep the conversation warm and respectful, use active listening and showing interest in their emotions and what they are saying.</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 are that I have to stress how important their engagement is and that we share responsibility for the child's development and how valuable their input on the child's past and future goals are, to describe their child to me, , give the context. It is important that I listen to them and to hear what their family priorities and needs are.</p>
<p>What do you focus on during the meeting? How do you ensure that the conversation stays focused on the goals?</p>	<p>I focus on the expectations that the parents have towards me as a teacher and if I can adequately support their voice during meetings. Also, if everything said and agreed upon is clear to the parents and everyone involved. I also make sure if there is a need for a break or summarizing what was said. I also watch parents' non-verbal signals so that I make sure they feel comfortable and trusting.</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>It is important to get the clear answer from the parents on what their expectations are and what makes them feel involved as a parent. We need to get as clear picture as possible of the family context to know how to establish a successful collaboration. In order to get that we need to establish a warm and positive communication with the parents.</p>
<p>How do you end the conversation?</p>	<p>The conversation ends by agreeing how pleasant the meeting was, stating future channels of communications, establishing times that best suit the parents for continuous communication and contact and with positive words about the collaboration, stating achievable next step that will be taken soon afterwards.</p>

## AFTER THE MEETING

Reflect on the following questions and explain.

Question	Answer & Explanation
How are you planning to follow up after the meeting? How do you ensure that the parent can still be involved after the meeting?	I plan to keep the communication going, to keep in touch with the parents and to define with them some achievable short-term goals that we can both help get achieved, pkeeping the same practice at school and at home. I will regularly talk to them, have weekly meeting, let them know that they can talk to me if something unexpected occurs.
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?	I will make notes in the school register but also keep a diary and ask the parents to do the same so that we can compare and discuss our perspectives. By sharing diary entries we can both learn from different perspectives and see how the partneship had affected the student's progress.
What does the reporting look like after the parent-teacher meeting?	I prepare the minutes of the meeting for the staff meeting and refer to each point agreed with the parents.I try to voice parents' perspective to the staff at the staff meeting so that the colleagues get the better idea of the parents' perspective and family context. I also provide enough insight into the complexity of the individual approach to the student by providing the colleagues with the data collected.

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