
CONDITIONS FOR EFFICIENT COLLABORATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PARENTS

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Abstract: Partnerships between family and school include mutual relations and activities between teachers, parents and other members of students’ families. A student’s success and achievements provide information about the level of family participation in their education.

One of the first steps in this direction is the establishment of good relations between school and family, in which communication is the underlying factor. It is a prerequisite for the creation of a partnership, which may influence a student’s academic success in a positive way. Good communication provides opportunity for coping with difficulties and failure of students. It enables the exchange of information between parents and teachers. Communication between teachers and parents is of vital importance for the academic success as well as for the formation of a student’s identity. The establishment of partner relations between family and school is an incredibly difficult task. It requires engagement, effort by both sides, and time.

Due to pressure and circumstances many families need special measures or additional support in order to be able to actively participate in the school life of their children and to help their children take maximum advantage of school. The busy routine of parents is one of the main reasons why they spare insufficient time for communication with teachers, for helping the educational process of the student, and also for participation in different common parent - student – teacher activities. The results from such an effort, however, would be significant.

It is important for every school to encourage and facilitate the partnerships between teachers and parents by increasing their participation in activities that contribute to the social, emotional and intellectual development of their children. This collaboration is necessary in order to ensure support and aid in a way that every child could succeed in school.

For this purpose, it is essential to create an appropriate school culture, defined by the values, adjustments and behaviour models, typical for the school as a whole.

This article presents the conditions necessary for the improvement of interaction between school and family.

Keywords: partnership, family, school

1. INTRODUCTION

School and family are the two main factors that impact the achievements and the formation of a child’s identity. The establishment of collaboration between them, and the ability for integration and completion are of key significance for the well-being and success of a child.

Partnerships between family and school include mutual relations and activities between school staff, parents and other members of students’ families. Efficient partnerships are based on mutual trust, respect and shared responsibility for the education of children and youngsters in school.

2. WHY ARE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN FAMILY AND SCHOOL IMPORTANT?

Family is the first environment in which children get into. Parents are the first educators of their children. And they continue to influence the learning and development of their children during the school years and after that – in the process of their formation as individuals. Schools have the crucial responsibility to teach the future generations, to help, to take care, and families trust schools, which are supposed to build the educational bases of their children’s future.

At the same time, schools need to acknowledge the vital role of family not only in upbringing, but also in education. That is why it is important for families and schools to work together in partnership.

Surveys show that efficient schools have high levels of parent participation. Such participation helps the improvement of education, attendance, discipline and student behaviour. The inclusion of family through different activities may have a strong impact on students’ education regardless of the social or cultural origin of the family.

Therefore, participation of families in school is of main significance and in direct relation with the high quality of education. It needs to be part of the main activity of schools.

It is necessary to encourage and create stable and efficient partnerships between all members of school communities, including teachers, families and students.

Those partnerships need to:

- see each partner as equally valuable for the creation of partner relations between school and family;
- respect the needs, interests and preferences of students;
- overcome the obstacles that families with different ethnic origin are faced with in school participation;
- create appropriate opportunities for inclusion of parents in school management;
- create appropriate opportunities for inclusion of students in school management;
- create better opportunities for upbringing, education and out-of-class activities for students;
- create school environment in which teachers feel satisfied with their profession.

The establishment of partner relations between family and school is an incredibly difficult task. It requires engagement, effort by both sides, and time. Due to pressure and circumstances many families need special measures or additional support in order to be able to actively participate in the school life of their children and to help their children take maximum advantage of school. The busy routine of parents is one of the main reasons why they spare insufficient time for communication with teachers, for helping the educational process of the student, and also for participation in different common parent - student – teacher activities.

The results from such an effort, however, would be significant. Families that have interests related with the educational system and are interested in the difficulties that schools face are a valuable support source, which schools should not underestimate. Schools that manage to engage families in their children's education have a precious helper, a source of information and experience.

It is important for every school to encourage and facilitate the partnerships between teachers and parents by increasing their participation in activities that contribute to the social, emotional and intellectual development of their children. This collaboration is necessary in order to ensure support and aid in a way that each child could succeed in school.

For this purpose, it is essential to create an appropriate school culture, defined by the values, adjustments and behaviour models, typical for the school as a whole.

3. CONDITIONS FOR REALIZATION OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Communication between a teacher and a parent is of key importance for the overall formation of a student. In order to improve it we need to find the answer to the following question: What are the appropriate conditions needed for the improvement of the teacher-parent relationship?

This can be achieved if working in the following directions: **expectations, communication and realizations.**

Expectations – parents and teachers have their own adjustments and expectations with regard to the realization of collaboration with the other side. Parents expect from teachers to educate their children by using innovative methods, by creating positive attitude towards studying, to improve their motivation and develop their skills, abilities and gifts to the maximum.

Parents also have particular expectations concerning students' achievements and their inclusion in various out-of-class activities. If these expectations are similar to the ones of the teacher and they are communicated, this would contribute to the creation of a good relationship between the teacher and the parent, and it would be a good prerequisite for positive communication between them.

Parents and teachers have an important role in the academic growth of a student. Both roles complete each other and only partner work provides optimal conditions for students in the process of their development.

Communication – intercourse between people is a two-sided process. The sender of information and its recipient are the factors mattering for its successful realization, decryption, and feedback as well. Here, such questions are also relevant: How often would parents want feedback on the achievements and difficulties in their child's development? What type of feedback would they like to receive from the teacher and the school?

Good communication requires constant informing of a parent about a student's development in the educational process. This can be fulfilled in different ways, and a teacher's job is to choose the most proper ones. Communication can be initiated by both parents and teachers. New technologies provide schools with new strategies for communication and parent inclusion.

Realization – successful collaboration between teachers and parents requires mutual respect and teamwork. All parents want their children to succeed in the educational process, and to achieve high results. Mutual

understanding is needed so that this general goal can be achieved. When a child and a parent feel supported by a teacher and vice versa, this would ensure a bigger advantage and increase the success opportunities of the student.

According to Sheridan and Kratochvil, the necessary conditions for partnership are „The Four A’s”:

Approach – school needs to take responsibility with regard to family participation, while the latter should share the responsibility for results in school.

Attitudes – school and family need to share the idea that together they can achieve more.

Atmosphere – school needs to turn into „family community”, building mutual trust.

Actions – Giving shape of partnership via two-way family-school communication; encouraging the engagement of family regarding home studying, more active participation in class, continuity.

They lead to a successful educational experience, normal social-emotional-behavioral development and positive educational results [7].

Schools and teachers only rarely help students reach their full academic potential. This is not an accusation of schools and teachers. It is rather a fact regarding children’s development. Students’ personal investments and their interest towards studying, for instance, are affected by parents’ messages [1]. That is why the family interaction approach is characterized by focusing on the importance of relations and establishment of significant partner relations. Partner work is a way to think about creating constructive relations between parents and teachers. Creating relations means developing a relationship between teachers and parents, intended to improve children’s studying and cope with the obstacles on its way. It requires sending the right message: „that mutual respect and interdependence between home, school and society are of vital importance for children’s development” [5].

Parents, teachers and students need to make acquainted with the expectations of the other side in the communication process. Each one of them needs to keep in mind that they have a common goal and the key to success is mutual respect.

Partnership does not come down to the necessity of parents to collect money or purchase items needed for the classroom, although they might be very important for work with students. Partnership means a two-sided engagement in a common activity, in which everyone, on equal terms, accepts to do something in order to get a common result that both sides are interested in and benefit from. Attracting parents as partners requires activeness and it could be realized **through inclusion in a real activity** and doing something together, and not through appeals towards parents about how they should help, be included (in principle) and be available when needed.

When parents are engaged, they give their children the important message that school is something valuable and meaningful [2].

A number of surveys carried out among students on an early stage show the positive results from participation of parents. They find expression in the enhancement of students’ results, improvement of their behaviour and their emotional state. It is especially important for parents of children with educational difficulties to be actively included in the education of their children. Academic scores only matter when the individual plans of children are made with the participation of parents and other relatives of the child, the ones who know the child best and are able to set reachable and at the same time challenging goals [3]. Parents need to take part in school teams and be active in discussions and making decisions related to the education of their child. But despite all evidence showing how important parents’ participation is, many of them refuse to be included [4], [6], [8].

Many parents share their unwillingness to participate in school activities, pointing lack of free time as a reason. Cultural peculiarities, negative experience from their school years and fear of failure are just some of the reasons for that passiveness of parents. Differences in culture, ethnic origin and socially-economic status may impede successful communication since the expectations of both sides sometimes do not coincide.

That diversity demands from teachers most of all to approach with respect and encourage families to participate by considering their story and the specifics of the environment they live in. In order to build relations of mutual trust and understanding between teachers and parents, it is important for teachers to accept their students’ culture and identify their families’ resources along with them [9].

Parents need to be clearly explained how exactly their participation would have a positive impact on their child’s development. This will also be a prerequisite for a dynamic and valuable partnership.

In order to create conditions, which will allow for an efficient partnership between family and school, the following is needed:

- Availability of teams, which organize, apply and evaluate partnerships;
- School policies and procedures, which clearly define and integrate principles and practices of efficient partnerships;
- Providing opportunity for school communities to share ideas, problems and good practices;

- Realizing accountability before society, which is expressed via success identification and partnership improvement [10].

4. CONCLUSIONS

Today's requirements for educational quality call for taking measures for collaboration with parents, so that the educational institutions can work well and fulfill their roles and duties in a reliable way. Although this fact seems undisputable, there are many schools and kindergartens where such initiatives are not being undertaken and ways of common activities are not being searched. Schools are extremely different in terms of their partnerships between families and schools, as well as in the energy and skills they apply in order to communicate with each other.

Achieving success in collaboration requires a significant change in the adjustments of some schools and families in order to build relations in which they see each other as allies in education and children's upbringing.

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