**PARENTS AT SCHOOL**

**– COMMUNICATION,**

**RELATIONSHIPS, CONTRIBUTION**

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“Curriculum Innovation for Social Inclusion” CISI

– supported by Erasmus + Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE)

**PARENTS AT SCHOOL**

**– COMMUNICATION,**

**RELATIONSHIPS, CONTRIBUTION**



Authors

Poland: **Urszula Markowska-Manista** (local coordinator), **Monika Skura, Anna Zielińska, Małgorzata Żytko**

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Project Coordinator: **Tamar Makharadze**, Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU)

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# logo projektu CISI**About CISI Project**

Faculty of Education, University of Warsaw is a partner in the international project “Curriculum Innovation for Social Inclusion” CISI – supported by Erasmus + Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) program. The project aims to develop new academic modules /certificate program/training programs enhancing the qualifications and skills of teachers towards special education in Georgian schools.

The new academic curriculum will help future and acting school teachers to enhance professional competencies in working with students with special educational needs (SEN). The overall goal of the project (CISI) is to contribute to the process of social inclusion of persons with disabilities by increasing the quality of inclusive education at public schools of Georgia.

The project is focusing on developing relevant competencies of future school practitioners – graduates from the Teacher Education Program and support continuous education towards special education for acting teachers and relevant field professionals. Besides, CISI is encouraging the development of more effective collaboration between schools, universities and state agencies.

Based on the above mentioned, CISI is focusing on the following objectives:

* Development of the new academic modules in special education in Teachers Education Program at CISI member GEO HEIs. The new modules will be based on the National Standards of Special Teacher – The new courses will respond to the requirement set up in this document;
* Development of the 60 credit Certificate Program in special education for school/field practitioners – This program will be available for school teachers, psychologist and social workers if they wish to deepen knowledge in this field and obtain a status of a special teacher.
* Development of the training programs in special education for all interested groups – school practitioners, students, academic staff, NGO representatives – these programs will cover introduction in special education and those topics that are most demanded for school/field practitioners.
* Strengthening collaboration of schools, universities, civic organizations and MoESCSG towards improving quality of inclusive education – CISI will initiate new ways of collaboration between these institutions.

*Małgorzata Żytko*

**1. TEACHERS-PARENTS COMMUNICATION**

**IN FORMAL EDUCATION**

Parents are the first and most important educators of children, they have specific rights and obligations. One of them is to provide children with education and proper development conditions. During the development of children, educational institutions such as kindergarten and school emerge, which should provide good-quality education and support developmental needs. School is a social institution; parents are part of this community. In addition to their previous educational and care tasks, they begin to play an additional role - the parents of the child in the kindergarten and then the parents of the student. They receive support in educational institutions in the process of bringing up their children. They become a school community focused on achieving a common goal - to provide their children with the best possible conditions for development.

A school that operates in a specific social context is co-created by four subjects: teachers, students, parents and the local community. Open to the environment, a democratic school integrates these groups around the education of children, encourages them to participate in this process, to cooperate. Children are full members of society, and their successful development is one of the most important tasks that adults should assign to themselves. The possibility of cooperation to achieve such an important goal for everyone should motivate to action, encourage the exchange of experiences, getting to know each other, supporting each other and integrating. Such an educational institution is a good place for the development of civic attitudes, raising parents' awareness of the importance and value of good children's education.

The condition for good cooperation between the school and parents is the organization of various forms of communication, which gradually build understanding and encourage joint action. The school, teachers should be the initiators of establishing good relations with parents. Children enter kindergarten or school with their parents and a place for parents at school should be provided. Parents should feel safe at school, feel that they are invited to cooperate. Their knowledge about children, children’s interests, competences, special abilities, but also difficulties in functioning, are respected and constitute a significant support for the teacher's work.

School is needed by parents, but parents are also indispensable at school, without their involvement and support it is difficult to achieve good educational results. The degree of parental involvement in the school's work may vary and they must be given a choice. There are parents who are actively involved in school life, want to act together, make decisions on matters important to the school. Other parents are only observers of the school reality, they engage rarely, only when invited to do so, mobilized by teachers.

Benefits for teachers from contact with parents:

* Parents are an important source of information about children, their strengths and weaknesses, and how to cope with difficulties
* Solving educational problems at school requires consultation with parents and additional knowledge about the child's functioning
* Parents can support children in the learning process by cooperating with the teacher, providing children with appropriate learning conditions
* Parents can motivate children to learn at school, develop their interests,
* Parents can join the education process at school using their professional competences, passions, interests, share it with children and get to know them in a different situation than at home
* Parents can decide to organize extra-curricular activities for their children at school.

Benefits for parents from cooperation with the school:

* Knowing how a child functions at school allows you to get to know his needs better, adjust expectations and actions accordingly, and help him / her better
* They learn about the goals of the school's task, how it functions, how children develop in a group of peers
* They can count on teachers' support in solving educational problems and consult their activities
* Get to know the way of thinking and upbringing other parents, share experiences
* Have contact with specialists who support them in the process of raising children
* Learn the role and importance of education in child development, help children build positive motivation to learn.

However, the cooperation between parents and the school is not always correct. Often parents are accompanied by distrust, anxiety for the child and the quality of the relationship with teachers. This is often the result of parents' negative experiences with school. They pass on this negative attitude to children, threaten them with school, and set them up negatively. Parents whose children have learning difficulties or misbehave at school are in an uncomfortable position. They are then called for an interview at school, receive a series of unpleasant information about the child, and are blamed for their children's failures. This makes them reluctant to contact the school, they do not want to meet teachers because they receive only negative information about the child.

Misunderstandings between teachers and parents also result from different expectations and different perceptions about the principles of upbringing. If parents are supporters of strict discipline, punishing bad behavior, and the school introduces other methods, e.g. encouraging children's independence, conflicts arise. Parents are also reluctant to the situation when the teacher instructs them, points out their educational mistakes, treats them with distance, proves their ignorance in matters of upbringing.

Teachers, on the other hand, accuse the parents of not being interested in the child and its school achievements. Reluctant to undertake activities for the benefit of school, passivity. When children do not have major problems at school, parents do not attend meetings. Asked to support the child at home, they excuse themselves due to the lack of time. They accuse teachers of having a bad attitude towards their own child. They have high demands and expectations of teachers and schools, do not understand the goals of education, and do not respect the developmental needs of their own children.

The basic condition for establishing positive communication is trust, which must be ensured by the school principal and teachers. This is an important task that can be accomplished in a variety of ways. One of the most important are meetings with parents, providing them with information about the school's operation, methods of working with children, and inviting parents to cooperate. The first meetings with parents should also help to learn about their expectations towards the school. It is worth telling them at the first meeting with parents that we are aware that they entrust to our care what is most valuable - their own children, and we will do everything to make them feel good at school, develop their skills, be successful and spend their time well. with colleagues. It is worth telling parents how we will work with their children, what we care about and what we count on on their part, how important they are to us.

Parents should be treated as equal partners, even when they represent different views or values. This cannot be a reason to express a negative assessment. But neither do we, as teachers, have to agree and accept everything. You should exercise your ability to express your own opinion and opinion without instructing your parents. In such communication, the teacher must be open and aware of his own pedagogical concept.

*You can use an exercise that will allow you to distance yourself from talking to your parents. It is worth making a private list of behaviors that annoy us in other people, arouse aversion. Then rate them on a scale: 1 the most annoying, 5 the least. On one sheet of paper, write down those rated 1, and on the other those rated 5, compare and think about what we have learned about ourselves and how we can modify our attitude. This should help identify the values that are most important to the teacher.*

**Forms of communication between teachers and parents**

The teacher should communicate with parents in a variety of ways, use opportunities for individual conversations and meetings in a larger group. The basic forms of communication are:

* Individual meetings
* School guide
* Group meetings
* Student's diary, contact book
* Occasional celebrations
* Family picnics
* Tours
* Notice boards
* A box of questions and demands
* Mobile Phone communication
* Electronic communication (email, sms, internet)

Parents prefer face-to-face contact with the teacher when important matters concerning their child or the class as a whole need to be discussed. Individual contact requires appropriate preparation by the teacher and taking up a specific topic that we want to discuss together with the parents.

The meeting with all parents requires an appointment in advance, the duration of the meeting and the presentation of the meeting agenda to the parents. On the other hand, providing parents with a lot of information about the timetable, teaching aids or the date of the trip does not require direct meetings, it can be done through a contact book, notice board, text message or e-mail contact. It is worth planning to place a special box at school, where parents can anonymously throw cards with questions, suggestions or comments.

For parents who start their contact with school, the school guide / guide plays an important role. There should be clearly and clearly structured information about the school and parents' invitation to cooperation.

Parents should also have a special room at school where they can meet without the school principal or teachers being present. Such a place is a clear sign from the school that parents are part of the community, have their own place for discussions and meetings.

**Meeting with parents**

Each meeting with parents must be carefully planned and prepared. Inform the parents in advance about the date of the meeting and present its plan. The teacher should focus on discussing specific issues, prepare additional written material for parents to distribute to them, e.g. a plan for class trips, dates of class events.

When planning a group meeting with parents, it is worth paying attention to:

* Room preparation: U-shaped or circular chairs can be arranged so that parents do not have to sit on benches or on small chairs. The teacher sits down with the parents, not at the desk, it will facilitate the conversation and create a better atmosphere.
* Planning a small snack, you can involve the parents in organizing the meeting
* Welcoming the parents and thanking them for coming
* Presenting the agenda for the meeting and asking if parents would like to add anything else
* Presenting the positive information first, the achievements of the students as a class;
* Negative information is presented as issues to discuss and not as a reprimand to parents
* Information on individual students is provided individually and can be prepared in the form of individual letters
* Information is provided in a specific, structured manner, in line with the plan
* Allow time for parents' questions, allow the parents to express themselves, listen carefully, and maintain eye contact
* Managing the discussion, keeping the focus on the main topic
* Finally, thank the parents for their parents' participation in the meeting.

Individual meetings with parents

Meetings with the parents of individual students play an important role in the teacher's work, often on difficult topics related to learning difficulties, bad behavior, and problems in relations with peers. The teacher must carefully prepare for such a conversation. You have to take care of a good atmosphere. Parents should be convinced that the teacher wants to solve the problem together with them, discuss the situation, and choose the best way to support the child.

During an individual conversation with parents, it is worth ensuring:

* A suitable place for a conversation that gives a sense of security, intimacy, creates a climate of trust; such conversations cannot be held in the school corridor in a hurry
* Welcome to the parent, thank him for coming, we can also offer tea or coffee,
* We do not start the conversation with negative information, even when the reason is bad student behavior; we start by identifying what is a positive feature;
* Communicate negative information in a calm manner, expressing concern and concern, but at the same time willing to find a solution together. Parents should feel that we care about solving the problems
* Do not assign a trait (label) to the child, eg he is lazy; it is worth describing the behavior, e.g. not doing his homework, looking for the reasons for such behavior
* Parents should be allowed to actively participate in the conversation, they cannot be passive listeners of the teacher's opinion; it is worth asking them for their opinion, giving them the opportunity to express themselves
* Parents should hear from the teacher specific suggestions for solving the problem and the types of support that will be given to the child
* The child and parents may also participate in the conversation, the teacher should pay attention to them, address them directly asking for information or explanations, treat them as a partner in the conversation, try to understand them
* The teacher should listen to the parents, maintain eye contact, sometimes paraphrase the statement (repeat the parents' statement in their own words to confirm their understanding), be open to a different point of view
* Confirm with body language and verbally focusing attention on the interlocutor (nodding, encouraging conversation - please keep talking ...)
* The conversation should end with a conclusion and planning of specific actions, ensuring the parents of constant contact.



*Anna Zielińska*

**2.** **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS WITH FOCUS ON POLISH SOLUTIONS**

Parents have traditionally (in almost all societies) been responsible for the child's upbringing and development. Over the centuries, they have decided whether, where and how the child will be educated. Raising children was a private matter, it belonged to the family. Public authorities did not interfere in the way the child was treated and raised. The situation of parents changed when in the nineteenth century universal compulsory schooling began to be introduced. Socio-economic development, new technologies and faster industrialization caused the society and the economy to need educated, at least at a basic level, workers. The nineteenth century was also a period of formation of nation states that needed soldiers who could write and read and handle more and more complex weapons. Elementary school, obligatory for all, with a program of teaching defined by public authorities, was supposed to create the people society needs, socially useful people. At the same time, in opposition to these trends, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, more and more attention was paid to the well-being and, over time, to children's rights. At the beginning of the 20th century, Ellen Key published her famous work *The Century of the Child* (1909), in which she took a decidedly individualistic stance, arguing for the comprehensive development of the child, often impossible in a formal school with unified curricula. In the development and education of a child, she assigned a special role to the parents, especially mothers, who are aware of the child's needs and are provided with knowledge about its development. An individualistic approach to education, ignoring the role of social relations and the needs of society, has not been universally accepted, but the clash of different approaches to children's education resulted in attempts to define the role and place of parents in school institution and school education. Strengthening the position of parents in the education of their children was also favored by the adoption of the concept of human rights as the basis for the activities of states and international organizations after World War II. They began to be included in legal regulations at the international level, at regional level and in the legal systems of individual countries.

**Legal regulations concerning parents in acts of international law**

The right of parents to decide on the education of their children was included in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, enacted shortly after the end of World War II in 1948. In accordance with article 26 paragraph 3 of this Declaration *Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children*.

In fundamental acts of international law, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on Human Rights: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights  and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights we can also find articles on parents' rights in their children's education.

In the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) a multilateral treaty adopted by United Nations General Assembly on 16 December the rights of parents to decide on the education of their children occur in the context of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 18). In accordance with Article 18 paragraph 4 of this Covenant: *The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.*

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 relates directly to the right to education, its fundamental values ​​and goals: *The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms…* (Article 13 par.1). The emphasis is placed on the development of education systems, which is to create equal opportunities for students from various backgrounds. States parties are committed to introducing free compulsory primary education and improving access to secondary, technical and higher education. In paragraph 4 of this article, the right of parents to choose a school for their children and their right to moral and religious education consistent with their beliefs is emphasized:

*The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions* (Article 13 paragraph 4).

The legal principles regarding the role of parents in the education of their children and the parents' decisions about this education are contained in all international legal regulations concerning children's rights. The most important of these is **The Convention on the Rights of the Child.**

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on 20 November 1989 (the 30th anniversary of its Declaration of the Rights of the Child). The Convention emphasizes many times that there are the parents who should ensure the child the possibility of using all the rights contained in the Convention, support its development and maturation in their own culture and tradition, and guide the child's upbringing according to their convictions. The Convention also mentions the development of respect for parents in a child among the many goals of education. The most important regulations regarding the rights of parents in the field of education are contained in Articles 5; 14 par.1,2; 18 par.1, 29, par.1lc of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Their content is as follows:

Article 5

*States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention.*

Article 14

1. *States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.*

*2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child*.

Article 18

*1. States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.*

Article 29

*1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:*

*(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values….*

**Legal regulations concerning parents in EU**

Regardless of numerous acts of international human rights law, including those of parents, local regulations in the field of human rights were adopted on various continents, taking into account the cultural specificity and traditions of these regions. In Europe, such a basic legal act is CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2012 / C 326/02 (Journal of Laws UE.C. No. 303, item 1). Its Article 14 deals with Right to education. The most important section for parents' rights is 3th: *The freedom to found educational establishments with due respect for democratic principles and the* ***right of parents to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions shall be respected…***

All the legal acts discussed above treated parents and their rights related to the education of children only in the context of human rights, freedoms and civil liberties. **The European Charter of Parents' Rights and Responsibilities** is a document whose importance in the legal system is less, but which more precisely regulates the rights of parents in education, and indicates their responsibilities, thus creating the basis for building the concept of "balanced" participation of parents in educational institutions. The European Charter of Parents' Rights and Responsibilities was developed by European Parents' Association (EPA) and incorporated in 1992. This declaration identifies the important role of parents in education. It represents the position that parents can demand from individuals and institutions responsible for the formal education of their child, so that their rights to the guiding principle are respected and an active role in the education of the child. Parents also have responsibilities to their children and the school.

According to the Charter, the parent has the right to be recognized as the prime educator of his child (p. 2). Parents may insist that their children's education takes place in appropriate conditions and that they are not discriminated against for any reason (p. 1). Parents also have the right to choose such a path of education for his child, which will be consistent with his / her convictions and accepted values (p.5)​​. The parent should have access to information about educational institutions as well as the needs, opportunities and educational achievements of their child in schools of all levels (in point 3 and 4). Parents have the right to receive support from all institutions in their child's education process (point 9). The charter gives parents rights that go beyond making them responsible for their children. Parents have the right to issue opinions and consult with the authorities responsible for formal education at all levels of their structures (point 8). They also have the right to demand from public authorities that the quality of educational services is of the highest possible standard (point 10) and to influence the educational policy implemented in their children's schools (point 7).

The European Charter indicates that, in addition to a number of rights, parents also have obligations. They include, at the most fundamental level, the obligation to consciously raise their children in a spirit of responsibility for themselves and the whole human world (p. 1). Parents are also obliged not to neglect their children (p. 2) and choose the right way of education (p. 5). Parents should be involved as partners in school education of their children (p.3) and provide the school with information aimed at achieving educational goals (p.4). Parents should strengthen the school's efforts to achieve educational goals (p.7) and generally involved in the life of their child's school (p.8). They should maintain democratic representative organizations at all levels to represent themselves and their interests (p.9). Parents should improve their skills as prime educators and partners in the home-school relationship (p.10).

An important issue is how the European Charter of Parents' Rights and Responsibilities is implemented in practice. In the EU countries, the role and rights of parents and their representative offices are defined by national legal regulations. Parents have the freedom to choose a school and the right to appeal against their child's refusal to admit their child to school. In Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Austria, parents have the right to appeal on a variety of issues, in particular regarding the assessment of their children, and the right to information about their children's progress and their own rights at school. In many countries, e.g. in Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Great Britain, state authorities finance parental training to enable them to fully participate in school life. In Sweden, Norway and Finland, funds for parent training are planned in local government budgets.

**Rights of parents in Poland**

The legal situation of parents in Poland has been regulated since 2016 by the Educational Law Act (consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2020, item 910). Parents in Polish schools have **individual rights** as persons legally responsible for their child, as his / her statutory representatives and **collective rights** to participate in bodies representing parents at school level and in local authorities.

**The most important individual rights of parents at school**

Parents have rights related to:

1. Compulsory schooling and compulsory education, including postponing the child's compulsory schooling and early admission to school
* parents can also apply for consent to home education and passing annual examinations by the child, which will allow the child to be promoted to a higher class.
1. Assessing, classifying and promoting their child to school
* parents should be informed about school requirements, about the rules of assessment, they should be informed about the child's educational problems and school grades planned for the child,
* they can appeal against their child's final assessment if it was issued in violation of the law.
1. The implementation of the child's right to maintain a national, ethnic cultural and religious identity

-parents decide about their child's attending religion classes and participation in classes in the languages ​​of the national minorities and the culture and history of ethnic and national minorities.

 4. Providing a child with pedagogical and psychological support

 -Parents should be informed in writing about all forms of support offered to their child.

 5. Tourism and sightseeing organized by the school

 -Parents must consent to the participation of their children in school extensions and other events organized by the school outside the framework curriculum.

**The most important individual responsibilities of parents at school**

1. Registering the child for school,
2. Ensuring that the child attends classes regularly,
3. Providing the child with conditions enabling preparation for classes,
4. If the child has obtained a home education permit, ensure the learning conditions specified in the permit

**Collective rights of parents at school**

Since 1992, the Parent Councils may and since 2005 have to operate in primary and secondary schools, technical and basic vocational schools. One representative from each class is elected to the Parent Council, the father or mother of the child attending that class.

**The rights and responsibilities of the Parent Council**

1. He may apply to the principal, other school bodies, the school managing authority, and the school superintendent with applications and opinions on all school matters.
2. Adopts in agreement with the Pedagogical Council the educational program of the school.
3. Provides opinions on the program and schedule for improving the effectiveness of education.
4. Provides opinions on the draft financial plan submitted by the school headmaster.
5. In order to support the statutory activities of the school, it may collect funds from voluntary contributions and other sources
* the rules for spending the parents' council funds are set out in the regulations,
* these funds may be held in a separate parent council bank account.

*Monika Skura*

**3. PROBLEMS OF FAMILIES WITH SCHOOL AGE SEN CHILDREN AND THE COOPERATION OF PARENTS WITH SCHOOLS**

A child's disability affects the social functioning of him/her and his/her family. Awareness of their problems, understanding and empathetic acceptance give opportunities for cooperation between parents and teachers. The cooperation will ensure that parents will receive the support and help they need, and as a result, their child will have good conditions to overcome developmental barriers.

**Stages of the adaptation process to a child's disability**

According to the traditional approach, we can talk about the stages of shock, emotional crisis, apparent adaptation and constructive adaptation.

There are approaches that describe the stages of the adaptation process slightly differently. They use the concept of loss and mourning and distinguish the stages: denial of reality, blame, depression, anger, negotiation and accommodation.

Parents are exposed to emotional experiences of the difficult process of coming to terms with the fact of having a child with a disability.

Many researchers argue that parents will never overcome the injury, nor will they be able to fully accept the disabled child and what has happened to them (the chronic sadness model).

Emotional difficulties in all families in such situations are similar, the way of experiencing the diagnosis of a child's disability is an individual matter, depending on many factors (the type of disorder of child, personal experiences, mental characteristics of parents, social and material situation, etc.).

Various situations and life events of a given family may mean that their individual path of adaptation to the situation is not simple and does not lead only to improvement and actual solution of problems. There may be emotional states from earlier stages that are characterized by greater severity of symptoms.

**Feelings accompanying the process of processing**

The adventurous process of experiencing many difficult feelings of parents: feelings of guilt, harm, anxiety and fear for themselves and the child, for the future, loss and uncertainty, constant seeing and lack of faith in the meaning of action, life, feelings of isolation and loneliness on the one hand, but also aversion to people, moving away from them, as well as jealousy and avarice towards others because they have healthy children and can be happy, feelings of stigmatization and worthlessness, and disappointment. In addition, the impact of tension and fatigue, regret, despair, helplessness, hostility towards the world, aggression and a sense of life defeat.

**Roles of mother, father and other people**

A child's disability raises many problems in life for the family. On the one hand, they are the result of personal injuries and experiences of parents, on the other - a natural consequence of taking care of a child who requires special care, treatment, rehabilitation and has specific needs in many spheres of life.

Regardless of the moment in which a child is diagnosed with a disability, this fact creates a new reality in life, in relation to which the family must make significant changes, including organisational ones. Unfortunately, even if so far parents have shared the responsibilities related to childcare as much as possible, now, under the new subdivision of tasks related to treatment and rehabilitation, there is usually a process that is unfavorable to family cohesion. The mother often quits her job, bears responsibility for rehabilitation, and the father focuses on earning money.

It should also be added that what happens in a marriage and in relations with a child who has developmental problems affects the social relations of the family. Spouses may experience difficulties in contacts with their parents / in-laws, sometimes feeling misunderstood, sometimes judged, sometimes involved in various types of dependencies: economic, organizational, emotional, etc.

Sometimes parents distance themselves from people because they feel that no one with healthy children can understand their problems.

**Parents of pupils with SEN in Polish educational system**

In Poland, in recent years, changes to the regulations governing the education of students with special educational needs emphasize the role of parents as partners and co-participants in the process of assessing the development and educational needs of a student, planning the scope and forms of support, monitoring progress and assessing the effectiveness of the support provided.

The parent may initiate contact with a psychological and pedagogical center and apply for a professional opinion of their child.

They have the right to participate in the development and modification of an individual educational and therapeutic program for their child and to participate in a multi-specialist assessment of its functioning.

Parents decide on the form of special educational need (kindergarten / integration school, mainstream, special), which is obliged to be provided by the local government body responsible for running a given type of school or institution.

Teachers and school principals are obliged to provide parents with suitable conditions for the implementation of their rights.

Well-organized cooperation with parents has a positive effect on the child's development, the conditions and effects of the work of teachers and the school headmaster, and the atmosphere of the educational institution. Relationships between teachers and parents can be a factor influencing the quality of teaching, building a uniform educational strategy at school and in the family.

**Important knowledge for teachers about the family of a child with SEN concerns:**

1) Material and economic factors (full or incomplete family, family members, parents' work or unemployment, standard for housing).

2) The emotional atmosphere at home (mutual relations between family members, awareness of responsibility for the life of children, family history related to the child's disability, siblings)

3) Approach to the child, emotional attitude (roles and tasks that the student fulfills at home, requirements, parents' attitude to the child's learning, preparing parents to help the school fulfill educational functions)

4) Cultural factors (parents' education, home furnishings - TV, computer, books, patterns of spending free time, parents' interests, parents' language culture.

**What should a teacher know about a pupil with SEN, in addition to information about his/her difficulties in functioning?**

the time spent by the student on learning, the intelligence and temperament of the student, bonds with peers, the student's abilities or dysfunctions, the student's attitude to compulsory education, the role of the student in the class, his/her passions and interests, as well as the way of spending free time.

**The possibilities of interaction between parents of a pupil with SEN and the school concern:**

- simultaneous impact on children within the family and school in the process of teaching, upbringing and care, creating continuity between classroom and home learning environments for students with SEN

- help in improving the organization of education, upbringing and care at school and in the family

- work to familiarize parents with the education, upbringing and care program, as well as with the organization and tasks for the school and parents resulting from school programs,

- cooperation to disseminate among parents the knowledge about the upbringing and care and educational functions of the family,

- encouraging parents to actively participate in the implementation of the curriculum, upbringing and care, and providing assistance to schools in this regard,

- getting acquainted with the principles and didactic intentions of the school,

- creating the right climate and conditions for the functioning of the school,

- participation in the current and long-term programming of the school's work.

**What parents expect from school?**

- individual approach to the child

- reliable information about the school's activities

- teaching independence, using various sources of information

- fair approach to the student

- developing the student's talents and interests

- help in overcoming difficulties, accepting the child

- indication of methods of effective learning

- a friendly atmosphere

- professionalism of the teacher, qualified teachers and specialists

- developing independence in children

- equipping the child with operational knowledge and skills

- ensuring the child's safety

- fostering the development of personality

- a diverse range of extracurricular activities

- positive educational interactions

- fair treatment of the child

- providing help in difficult situations

- noticing the otherness of the child and appropriate actions

- a rich teaching base

**Research shows that teachers expect parents to:**

- Have an honest conversation about the child and its problems

- Assist in the preparation of school and class celebrations

- Specify their expectations towards the teacher and school

- Provide effective cooperation in solving problems

- Not express bad opinions about the school and teachers in front of the children.

- Have openness and understanding

- Have systematic contact with the teacher and school

- Apply established interactions (unifying educational interactions)

- Support educational activities

- Have honest factual information about the work of the school and teachers

- Show mutual respect

**A recipe for good cooperation with parents of students, examples:**

- not to think that we are always right and that we know everything,

- do not stick to the usual patterns,

- it is worth looking, listening, feeling and searching carefully,

- always be ready to help parents solve the problem,

- be honest, communicative and open,

- be flexible, open to changes and interesting proposals,

- accept and calmly analyze criticism from parents.

An important task of educators is to make parents aware of the importance of cooperation with the school as a didactic and educational institution, as well as to encourage them to carefully observe their own child, support them in their development and create optimal conditions for learning.

**The goals regarding cooperation between teachers and parents seem to be significant, for example:**

- making parents aware that the multilateral development of a child depends on jointly implemented activities,

- strengthening the emotional bond between educators and parents,

- exchange of opinions and observations, e.g. on the physical or social development of a child,

- suggesting specific forms of educational interactions to parents, by means of which they could help their children solve various problems,

- making it easier for educators to understand the child's attitude towards their family and the family's expectations towards the child.

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*URSZULA MARKOWSKA-MANISTA*

1. **PARENTS' INAPPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS TOWARD THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THEIR CHILDREN - HIGHER OR LOWER THAN ARE REALISTIC?**

**TEACHERS IN COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

„As first teachers of their children, parents bear special responsibility for their nurture and education, while school is to support home education rather than replace it. Without tight cooperation between the school and family home, it is impossible to provide students with adequate educational opportunities. All school should thus strive towards making the parents willing to engage in the school life. The teachers have to be willing and able to enter into good contact with the students’ parents. The current state of parent-teacher relations is not always satisfactory, while the parents’ scope of influence on the functioning of the school is still too narrow. Unfortunately, there are many stereotypes and prejudices that burden the social consciousness” (Rafał-Łuniewska, p. 27).

Parents usually find daily confrontation with their children’s special needs very challenging. Experiencing difficult situations as well as exclusion from various spheres of educational and social functioning (both for the child and the parent) can be hurtful, demotivating and can discourage them from cooperation. It must be noticed however that virtually all parents engaged in their children’s education can face problems, barriers and failures. It equally concerns teachers who teach, communicate and cooperate with their students’ parents on a daily basis. However, from a psychological perspective, “the teacher’s relations with students’ parents are asymmetrical. The teacher has a certain advantage. He/she works on behalf of an institution, has decision-making capacity, and is a professional holding knowledge and experience. Hence the responsibility for the shape and nature of relations with parents lies in the teacher’s hands.”(<https://perfectus.edu.pl/jak-wspolpracowac-z-rodzicami-uczniow-ze-specjalnymi-potrzebami-edukacyjnymi/>)

It is not by far an easy task as aside from an individual approach to relations with particular parents, adequate cooperation with them is an equally important aspect. “Cooperation – is a kind of joint activity (undertaken by at least two agents), oriented towards realising a common task” (Maszke 2005, p. 42). Schools are not able to fulfil their educational obligations connected with students with SEN without cooperation with their parents. The goal is to create an atmosphere at school in which parents of students with special educational needs will feel safe and be convinced that the teachers take interest in the students’ wellbeing. This in turn will help to build a space of mutual trust and contribute to motivating parents to cooperate with the teachers with particular students in mind. This cooperation refers to:

* positive motivation and partnership,
* defining mutual expectations and possibilities of cooperation,
* active and systematic flow of information and so: treating parents as the main experts in matters concerning their children (parent as a source of important knowledge), providing parents with knowledge about their children’s situation at school, receiving feedback and remaining in contact (conversations about their children’s functioning, progress)
* support and information about where this support is provided (emotional, specialist, remedial)
* perceiving parents as allies and including them in school activities.

**Partnership**means treatingeach other as**partners**rather than merely as contractors providing systemic educational services. It should be treated as a priority in building good relations: parents-students-teachers-school. Teachers should not overly emphasise or use their advantage over parents, imposing their vision of education of particular students with SEN. This approach recommends: including parents in the process of planning and evaluating the work with their children; informing the parents about the aims, ways and methods of achieving the intended aims of working with their children and enabling the parents to participate in their design (knowledge, cooperation, consideration of the parents’ voice and communicating why their voice is important). Defining mutual expectations and possibilities of cooperation as well as the rationality of steps undertaken in the process are important in this regard. Partnership allows the parents to have a sense of being genuine partners of teachers and understand that their opinions and advice are meaningful in the context of supporting children with SEN at school. In this kind of relation, it is also worth paying attention to a clear formulation of mutual expectations.

Hence, firstly: the teacher should create communication conditions in which the parents will be able to openly:

- express their needs in the area of education and support for their children with SEN

- share their expectations about the form of support and help for their children with SEN provided by the teacher and the school.

The teacher should provide precise and clear information to the parents about the possibilities and limitations in meeting the parents’ expectations, and so: precisely define what kind of support he/she is able to provide to the child in line with the obligations and systemic conditions of the institution, and which expectations are beyond his/her competences and possibilities offered by the school as an institution.

The teacher should never give excessive promises, suggest that “*perhaps something else can be done*”, to avoid situations in which the parents are later disappointed and bear grudges (it is better to offer less than not to be able to fulfil one’s commitments and face the consequences of insinuations, or expectations that cannot be met at a particular time and place).

Secondly: the teachers should substantively and precisely define what his/her expectations are towards the parents of children with SEN, what support, activities and initiatives undertaken by the parents they can count on in this cooperation for the wellbeing of their children. These arrangements made at the initial stage of building teacher-parent relations ensure a sense of safety and prevent misunderstanding and disappointment. They also build trust, as both sides are aware of what they have committed to and what they can expect from their partners in this cooperation.

In a partner relationship, the teachers should not perceive parents as a problem as they are their allies who want the best for their children. Parents are a source of important knowledge about their children which the teachers need in their daily work with students with SEN. Parents know their children well, they know what problems and challenges their children face. They know their children’s needs, strengths, what motivates or discourages them. Using knowledge provided by the parents is crucial in the work of teachers working with students with SEN. Thanks to this knowledge, the students can receive adequate education and support at school in a way that is the most adapted to their individual needs and psychophysical abilities, with the methods that are similar to those the students’ parents apply at home. It is important that the teachers share their knowledge and insight with the students’ parents in a non-condescending, non-imposing and delicate way. This way, the parents (from various backgrounds, very diverse and in different life situations) will not feel judged, criticised, lectured or forced to comply with and apply the strategies, methods and solutions selected by the teachers.

In the process of providing knowledge and reports from implemented activities to the parents of students with SEN, it is recommended to be systematic and remain in constant contact. Up-to-date information exchanged between the teachers, school and parents provides the most adequate insight about the children and enables the best understanding of their situation. Personal meetings (or with support teachers or other important school staff) based on a conversation and information exchange (about successes, challenges, problems, failures, progress, activities, wellbeing, etc.) are the most effective and satisfying (both for the parents and teachers) form of contact.

Not all conversations about the functioning of children with SEN with their parents are easy. Teachers should remember that parents are not specialists or therapists (Wołosiuk, Sobczuk, Ruszkowska 2017). They should be tactful and delicate, avoid valuating, generalising and instead be understanding and try not to cause pain. In the case of parents of children with SEN, it is worth initiating meetings earlier than in the case of other children’s parents. It might be worth arranging a suitable date of the meeting, ensuring that the place and atmosphere are comfortable. Even if the parents refuse, it is worth remaining in touch and attempting to arrange meetings, and being open to feedback from the parents. Lack of response is also an important message, it can result from a number of factors, e.g. from the conviction that this kind of meetings is another source of stress, problems or negative emotions and the inability to meet the expectations that schools set towards the parents of children with SEN.

What is important in this communication is to draw attention and emphasise children’s strengths, e.g. their efforts, achievements, progress connected with particular activities and tasks at a particular time. This reinforcement and positive aspects (advantages and strengths) noticed in the child with SEN by the teacher; counteract asymmetries and one-sided, difficult communication focused only on challenges and problems.

There is no formula for perfect communication with parents about the way their children with SEN function at school. It is worth analysing all messages and making a constructive use of positive and negative comments made by the parents, their critical remarks, expectations, reservations, their perspective on the challenges and problems, their comments about the causes of challenges and the solutions they propose or search for as parents.

„Many parents dream about optimal development for their children, but primarily about a school where their children go with joy” (Rafał-Łuniewska, p. 22). Parents of children with SEN face daily challenges and discriminatory situations, hence empathic communication based on respect and kindness, in which they feel accepted and understood, is crucial in cooperation. It must be remembered that teachers are not therapists of either parents or students. They are teachers searching for a possibility to follow their vocation oriented towards the wellbeing of children.

Parents of children with SEN are often perceived as difficult partners for teachers. However, it is worth looking at parents as allies in teacher’s work and acknowledging the meaning of their support and engagement.

Partner cooperation between the teachers and parents of students with SEN has a positive influence on the effects of their education. It also contributes to parents engaging in the school life, in which they can initiate, plan and co-implement various school activities in cooperation with the teachers and other parents. When the teacher notices and recognises parents’ engagement e.g. in the form of an official acknowledgement, letter or diploma, they are motivated to continue working, they realise that they are important partners of the school their children attend. Importantly, this active engagement of parents at school can be an opportunity to emphasise the students’ strengths and achievements. The teachers decides how, when and why they invite parents to participate in classes and other activities in which they can show the students’ achievements – present their skills and various effects of creative work.

**Recommendations**

“A guidebook inviting parents to dialogue recommends:

1.    Listen, hear and speak with respect. Respect is holding and showing recognition of another person through communication with a [positive] attitude, tone, posture, gestures, look, words.

2.    Listen, hear and speak like a learner. Be genuinely interested in another person and genuinely believe that you can learn from them.

3.    Listen, hear and speak to understand – do not too quickly, true understanding never ends.

4.    Listen, hear and speak with concern. Silence or pauses in speaking are important. Pause before you speak, give parents time to finish, but also give yourself time to think about what and how you are going to say.

5.    Listen, hear and speak, with simultaneous self-reflection. Reflect – do not diminish he complexity of a dialogue through reducing the process to the technique alone. Listening, hearing and speaking are not only techniques” (Gulczyńska 2020, p. 188).

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# Wika E., Jak współpracować z rodzicami uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi?

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Urszula Markowska-Manista, Monika Skura, Małgorzata Żytko, Anna Zielińska,

Faculty of Education University of Warsaw, Poland

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