

Programme, materials and resources for parents' involvement
with developed workshops scenario

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Sub-activity 3.2.1.: Design a program for parents, teaching materials, and training resources for involving families as collaborators and contributors in their children's pre-school programs

1. Manual for professionals

1.1. How to use the manual

The manual is intended for professionals employed in pre-school institutions regarding developing and nurturing the involvement of parents in work and decision-making in pre-school.

The idea of this manual is to offer practitioners useful, contemporary knowledge for involving parents in the work of kindergartens, but also to offer much more. We are sure that the information and knowledge offered to you will not only have an impact on your professional development, but we believe that it will be useful in your personal development as well.

The manual consists of four closely related parts.

In the first part, we are focused on the **basic premise of what it means to involve parents in decision making and the work of kindergartens.**

In the second part of the manual, the emphasis is on **practical guidelines for building a relationship, involving parents in work and decision-making in kindergarten.** This section covers a range of topics that provide answers to a number of questions that professional practitioners encounter on a daily basis during cooperation and building relationships with parents in kindergarten (e.g. mapping needs, planning, communication with parents, conflict resolution). Particular emphasis is placed on the involvement of parents and families of children at risk.

The third part of the manual offers a **scenario for workshops on the following topics: Parents' rights and responsibilities for cooperation and partnership with pre-school institutions; Diversity of forms for parents/ family involvement; Equal responsibilities of mothers and fathers for involvement; Encouraging fathers' involvement; Additional support to parents of children at risk and children vulnerable to exclusion.** The program design will include developing workshops scenario, handouts, booklets, and manuals for parents' involvement in the content of the workshop.

In the fourth part we **present the theoretical foundations of working with parents.** The paper is based on the theoretical concepts of Relational Competence as defined by Jul and Jensen with two significant additions: Adlerian principles of understanding the origin of behavior and Solution-oriented therapy. We believe that these approaches complement and provide a relevant cohesive approach to working with parents. Also, we offer you a rich list of additional literature that can serve you for further and deeper exploration of the topic.

All chapters can be read separately, but as you read, you will notice that they complement each other and form a whole necessary for successfully building relationships with parents.

Many chapters carries "Takeaway Messages" in the form of short sentences that can be used by professionals to remind them of the principles outlined in the handbook. Some chapters contain questions for reflection as well as a recommendation of relevant literature, videos, or inspirational articles.

We highly value the development of reflection in practitioners because we know that it is reflexive questions that help us learn from our own practice, see challenges from a new perspective and develop our professional competencies. You can answer some of the questions in a group of colleagues or individually. In any case, we believe that it will be of value to you and inspire you to try some of offered knowledge in practice. The development of relational competencies is a practice focused on the processes that occur between people, in this case, professionals and parents. A significant portion of the manual is aimed at developing the reflective practice of professionals with the goal of increasing their self-awareness and self-esteem as educators. This, in turn, contributes to their professional development and fosters better collaboration and involvement of parents in the work and decision-making processes in the kindergarten.

We recommend that readers read the entire manual in order to gain insight into the whole and learn about the basics on which workshops for parents are based. In later readings and using the suggested workshops, feel free to choose and use the chapter you need.

If you are just starting the path of involving parents in the work of the kindergarten or you want to change the current way of building a cooperative relationship with parents, be gentle and responsible towards yourself and start with activities that seem simplest and closest to your current practice. Set reasonable and measurable goals. Don't expect too much from yourself; building relationships and involving parents in work and decision-making in kindergarten is a process that has its ups and downs and requires time. For starters, the step-by-step principle is a good foundation.

1.2. What do we mean by involving parents in work and decision-making in kindergarten?

Parental involvement could be defined as the participation of parents in the development and education of their children from birth onwards, in recognition of the fact that they are the primary influence in their children's lives.

Parents and practitioners bring unique elements to the pre-school. Parents know about the home situation, their extended family, significant people in their child's life, culture, health, history, adversities, and issues related to the individual childⁱ.

Practitioners have knowledge about the needs of all children in the pre-school, child development and learning, curriculum activities, and peer relationships.

When designing the process for parental involvement and goal setting, the current state of the kindergarten and the goals of other program activities should be taken into account in order to synchronize with each other. The attitudes, experiences, and expectations of all involved in the process should be taken into account when setting goals and assessing their achievement. *You can read more about the process of needs mapping and parental involvement planning in sections 2.3 and 2.4.*

Kindergarten should ensure that professionals and parents have both formal and informal opportunities for communication and information sharing about the child. **Parental involvement is systemic planned practice in kindergarten, which means that responsibility of kindergarten is both to identify, built opportunities and initiate contextually relevant processes to establish programs that involve parents in the education of their children and broader priorities and activities in kindergarten.**

While the formal opportunities can be quite apparent (e.g., meetings with parents), due consideration should also be given to creating informal interaction with parents and may begin with something as fundamental as making them feel welcome within the setting.

Example:

- 'Welcome' signs placed around the kindergarten;
- Inclusive 'front desk' reception practice, include bilingual office staff or information and procedures written in several languages

The practitioner needs to ensure that this communication supports the child's learning and development and could achieve this through involvement of parents. Examples of this can include:

- Developed systems and processes so parents have daily access to information about their child's behavior, development etc., through a range of media that parents know how to use and understand the information.
- Preschool internal policies are written in consultation with parents.
- Parent's feedback is built into a yearly plan and informs future events and activity.
- Strategies to support children are negotiated, agreed and implemented with parents

and other different types of meetings, written communication, parents in pre-school, home contact, etc.

For a start, it will be helpful to clarify the term 'parent.' Usually, we are familiar with the definition of parents that includes mothers, fathers, legal guardians, and the primary carers of children.

In practice, professionals know that there may also be other significant adults in a child's life, for example, a grandparent. These adults may spend a lot of time with a child, develop loving relationships and seen as responsible for the child. Sometimes, these persons are the main contact with the child's family and are able to tell professionals much about the child's home environment.

In this manual, term "parents" refers to biological, adoptive, and step-parents as well as primary caregivers, such as grandparents, other adult family members, and foster parents. Families can be biological or non-biological, chosen or circumstantial. They are connected through cultures, languages, traditions, shared experiences, emotional commitment, and mutual support.

However, **in legal terms**, there is a potential discrepancy between who may be seen as the parent of a child and who holds legal responsibility for the decision about the child's health, education, etc. That is why it is of great importance to know the family law and to be acquainted with the legal family background of exercising parental rights.

Practitioners are often faced with the question of whom they should work with and engage in the dialogue about the child's learning, development, and well-being. There may not be a general and clear answer to this; there may be numerous different arrangements. It is important to be aware that only parents with parental responsibility can sign consent forms, need to agree to others collecting their children from kindergarten or make final decisions about the child's education, health etc.

You can have agreement with the parents that, for example, the grandmother will bring and collect the child from kindergarten. Although the grandmother is playing a major role in supporting her grandchild's learning and well-being, you will still have to find ways of engaging the parents in kindergarten.

For the purposes of this manual and practical engagement with parents, we will use a broader definition of the term 'parents' than the one arising from the understanding of parental responsibility and therefore also include other significant adults in a child's life in this term. Also, when we mention families, we have in mind a multitude of different forms of families.

Recommendation:

Dr Karen Mapp on parent and family engagement in education

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YXH8VfZ89Y>

1.3. Why is parental involvement important?

The family and the educational institution are the two most important contexts that influence children's development and learning through two-way communication and different types of engagement on both sides.

- Parents are children's primary educators
- Parents and professionals working in partnership benefit children
- Parental involvement is support to parenting
- Parental involvement is long-term support to the community.

In this regard, professionals in early childhood education and care institutions need to be aware of the importance of parental involvement and have in mind some "truths" about parental involvement:

1. All parents have hope and goals for their children. They differ in the way they support their children's efforts to achieve those goals;
2. The family environment is one of several environments that affect the child at the same time. In order to achieve the well-being of children, it is necessary for the institution to cooperate with other environments;
3. The parent is the main participant in the upbringing and education of the child, but the educational institutions can strengthen their parental competencies;
4. Parental involvement must be a legitimate element of education. It deserves equal emphasis on elements such as program improvement and evaluation;
5. Parental involvement is a process, not a program of activities. It takes constant energy and commitment;
6. Parental involvement requires a vision, policy, and framework. Consensus is very important;
7. Parents' interaction with their children is a cornerstone of parental involvement. The program must recognize the value, diversity, and weight of this role;
8. Obstacles to parental involvement lie in the practices / already established forms of influence in the institution. They are not set by the parents;
9. Every parent can be "hard to reach." Parents must be identified and approached individually; they are not defined by gender, ethnicity, marital status, education, or income;

10. Successful parental involvement fosters relationships and partnerships that strengthen the bonds between home and school, parents and practitioners, parents and school, school and community.

Recommendation:

Parent Engagement with Debbie Pushor PhD.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyP3NpCOBIM>

1.3.1. Involvement of parents of children at risk

The goal of involvement of parents in the work of the kindergarten is, among other things, to support the child's development. When we talk about the involvement of parents of children at risk, it is useful to think about 3 levels of support through involvement, depending on families' and communities' needs.

1. **Universal support** Provided through activities and services that families of young children need and use most. It is designed to benefit all families, caregivers and children. Information and resources are tailored to the child's age and the family's circumstances. Universal support should give basic guidance and support in everyday situations but also in time of challenges or problems.

Example: parent meeting, accessible information boards, volunteer actions in which parents participate...

2. **Targeted support** Focuses on families and children who are affected by risks such as poverty, immigration, illness, violence, humanitarian emergencies etc. The aim is make children, parents and families feel welcome in kindergarten, to reduce negative effect of the risk to which the family is exposed and strengthen their's capacity to cope.

Example: information on the website translated into the languages of national minorities, use of correct terminology about certain states or groups, use pictures on informational boards for illiterate parents, parent discussion cafes...

3. **Indicated support** Specialized services for families or children with identified needs. This form of support is most often provided by experts from various fields in the kindergarten (Counseling service in kindergarten) or institution or organization in local community. If it is provided in kindergarten group it has to be team work of professionals from different fields (eg. educator, social worker, psychologist)

It is important to remember!

All children and families need access to universal support through systematically planned practices and actions of involving parents in the work of preschool.

But families and parents of children at risk also **need extra help** from professionals in kindergarten.

So, should they be supported by universal services or specialized ones? Answer is “Both”!

Children, parents and families should never be excluded from universal support, because there is no stark line between children, parents and families who use universal services and those who need additional support.

Work in teams and carefully evaluate who should be provided by tailored support for vulnerable families and make them easy to access.

Always make the best use of universal services, because even with best intentions sometimes targeted support can supports and strengthens stigma or social exclusion.

Reflective group activities:
How do families you work with understand their participation in the life of the pre-school?
How do your colleagues understand parents/families' participation?
How does your institution encourage (or not) this participation?
What means can professionals use to encourage all families' participation in the life of the institution?
What are the barriers to the families' participation?
Are there families with better participation? Why?
Are there families who have never participated? Why?
To what extent are these differences related to their socio-cultural diversity?
How do educators plan strategies to surpass these difficulties?
How are you engaging those parents who are 'hard to reach'?
How are you engaging with the community to forge stronger links for parental involvement?

1.4. Ideas for parental involvement - examples of practice

It is not always easy to simplify what exactly parental involvement is. It cannot be done beyond considering the existing educational policies, institutional network and internal dynamics but also the families (un) availability, structure, cultural background.

However, what we can do is take into account that the involvement of parents in the work of the kindergarten must cover different **levels of involvement**:

Informing – (eg. reporting on current events, procedures, daily reports and contact with parents)

Consulting – (eg. conversations with parents in all, not just in problem situations.)

Joint decision-making- (eg. parents meeting, discussion groups, parent's council...)

Joint action- (eg. stay of parents in a group, volunteer actions in kindergarten, joint actions in the local community.)

Or you can think in terms of different activities:

- **Daily contact.** Parents and educators must exchange information with families every day from the first day of child's stay. Develop strategies (notice board, home-school notebook/diary, viber groups,) internal organization of information transfer between the educator in the group and the one in charge of issuing children.) facilitate the exchange when the teacher cannot speak to all families. Think about reorganization of the rhythm of the day in accordance with the needs of the family.
- **"On on one" meetings with parents .** Avoid meetings done only in case of conflict or at the beginning or end of the school year. Use them to connect to parents, to be curious about the child life or to share information about the child and to get to know each specific family. Make it easier for parents to organize meetings. Be open to online (zoom, skype ...) options for individual meetings with workers. If the parent gives consent, the meetings can be recorded and sent to the parents, and the recording also remains in your archive.
- **Group Meetings.** Avoid the one-way model, where the educator is the only one who talks. Group meetings can be used for getting to know parents, conveying information, mapping your parents' needs, planning, connecting parents with similar issues, challenges and so on.
- **Involvement in preschool group activities.** Parents and families can participate in the preschool during the adaptation process, in workshops, school outings, talks, having breakfast together, book clubs, volunteering, going to the park, "old parent helping new parent" activity...
- **Involvement in work of preschool and its organization.** Cooperation at a more formal level through participation in kindergarten teams and bodies of the institution (parents' council, board of directors)

- **Involvement in joint actions in local community** - supporting or volunteering in an action organized by an institution or organization in the local community
- **Home visits** – For example a visit of the whole group to the neighborhood where one of the children lives (ex. new child in a group) and a parent can be a “tour guide” through the neighborhood, or visits can be an advisory and informative visit to the parents in accordance with their needs.

At the links below, you can see different ideas for involving parents in the work of the kindergarten.

- The **Incredible Years program** and intervention are a series of programs focused on strengthening parenting competencies and fostering parenting involvement. The Parent programs are grouped according to age.

<https://incredibleyears.com/>

- **A PAR project Goals** are to promote the holistic development of children and their families; Prevent and fight social and educational problems, since birth.

<https://a-par.org/>

- The **Family Engagement Playbook** is a collection of [promising research-based approaches](#) to strengthen the competencies of people, groups, and organizations that are dedicated to families. The Playbook offers ideas, models, and tools that can be easily integrated into training, continuing education, and organizational learning opportunities.

<https://medium.com/familyengagementplaybook/approaches/home>

2. Methodology - Involvement of parents in the work of kindergartens - how to built a relationship

Take out note: Relationships are two way streets.

Recommendation:

Dr Tim Moore: Authentic Engagement – The role of relationships at the heart of effective practice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKvRXvXTZ6w&t=170s>

The parental involvement approach described in this manual is based on the importance of building a parent-professional relationship. In manual we are focused on **developing relational competences** in pedagogical relationships.

Relational competences are: *“Professional's willingness and ability to "see" other person (child, parent) on its own terms and attune her behavior accordingly without giving up leadership, as well as the ability to be authentic in her contact with the child. And as the professional's ability and will take the full responsibility for the quality of the relation.”* (Jul & Jensen, 2014)ⁱⁱ.

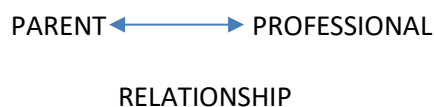
You can read more about the development of relational skills in *Chapter 4*.

The relationship-based model of involvement of parents in work of preschool represents a **shift of focus from the expert model** of prototypical relationships with families to **user model**.

EXPERT MODEL	USER MODEL
The professional is the expert and makes the decisions. Involvement start with messaging to parents. There is no need to give too many explanations to parents because the professional is the expert.	Both parents and professionals brings necessary knowledge. Involvement start with listening to parents. The focus is on partnership and dialogue between professionals and parents.

<p>The contacts are scarce and highly technical-professional language is used (difficult for the parents and families to understand). Professionals is usually placed at a higher level.</p>	<p>The relationship is based on equality, as each is an expert on either knowing the child or on educational opportunities and alternatives.</p>
<p>The point of view of the parents is not taken into account and the professional feels he/she should tell the parents how to relate to children and how to organize family life.</p>	<p>There is dialogue with the aim of reaching understanding and finding solutions.</p>
<p>Do TO and FOR parents. Providing programs for families.</p>	<p>Do (co-create) with parents. Building relationships with parents and families: ask questions, listen, empower, share perspectives and information, partnering, codesign, implement, take risks, support parent... Encouraging families to experiment with new practices.</p>

So, in this manual, regarding involvement of parents in work and decision making in preschool we will focus on a parent, a professional and third part – their relationship. In the fourth chapter of the manual, the settings for building relationships with parents are elaborated in more detail



In this approach, professionals can individualize actions and communication strategies to be responsive to each child’s family living situation, cultures, languages, beliefs, values, practices, traditions, and strengths. Effective family involvement means taking a **strengths-based perspective that identifies and builds on the abilities and positive qualities of each family.**

Professionals must collaborate with parents to identify family strengths and resources to meet challenges and reach family goals. These resources may be available in their family, social network, neighborhood, or community, and may include parent-led organizations and other organizations or institutions from local community.

When their relationships are mutually respectful and trusting, educators can learn with parents about how family well-being is affecting their children's ability to feel safe, secure, and interested in learning.

Sometimes different factors can influence quality and optimal frequency of relationships.

- Sometimes between professionals there is a stigma that parents are difficult to work with.
- Establishing a relationship with parents may be considered as something secondary in a culture of preschool.
- Many highly competent professionals are competent in working with children and may experience relationship with parents as challenging.
- Family and school relationships are complex, with emotional factors involved and usually with little or no expectations shared by both agents.
- Professional's lack of social and emotional skills.

Most interactions between teachers or child care providers and families occur in brief periods at the beginning and end of the day, at times of separations and reunions. These interactions, although sometimes rushed can provide important opportunities to involve parents and build on relationships. These are times to share observations and stories about the child, exchange practical information, and connect about daily activities and routines.

Longer, planned meetings, such as parent-teacher/child care provider conferences, also play a role in supporting involvement of parents in early childhood programs. By making sure that families feel welcome and are actively involved in decision-making, teachers and child care providers can engage with families as true partners.

Each pre-school and each group are unique, and experiences with different forms of involvement may vary considerably, which is why implementing requires knowledge and understanding of the core concepts, their theoretical background but also the context of pre-school and parent population and their needs.

We suggest that you, as a professional at a pre-school, follow this manual closely, but at the same time, we emphasize that both the facilitator's sensitivity to the specific group of parents, and awareness of specific needs or difficulties in the group, and the adaptation and sensitivity to the specific context and situation are crucial factors for the successful collaboration with parents.

YOUR SENSITIVITY, RESPONSIVENESS, FLEXIBILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE IN DIALOGUES WITH THE PARENTS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT "NON-NEGOTIABLE" ACTIVE INGREDIENTS.

2.1. Parent and our view of them

The way in which professionals consciously or unconsciously perceive parents affects the quality of the relationships they build with them.

Professional beliefs about parents usually become self-fulfilling prophecies.

To be able to develop constructive relationships with parents in kindergarten, it is important not to pre-judge them but to have an open mind to their way of family life and their style of parenting.

There are many different ways in which individuals and families can lead a quality life that provides a supportive environment for a child's development. And those ways may be different from ours.

Professionals are encouraged to think of every child as a unique individual. The same principles should be applied to his parents and family - they are as unique as the child is.

Taking time to get to know individual parents, their interests, concerns, and ideas will prevent you from stereotyping them as well as ensuring that they feel more valued and respected. This, in turn, will lay the foundation for effective partnership working.

When we think about our beliefs-stereotypes and prejudices about the parents we work with, it is important to realize that we all have them. They are part of the human experience. Some of them may be related to religion, national identity, parental culture, illness, lifestyle, profession, etc.

For example, it is extremely difficult for some educators to establish a relationship of cooperation with parents who are educators by profession due to the prejudice that they will evaluate them. Or to work with single parents because they feel sorry for them.

Frequent stereotypes related to the involvement of parents in the work of kindergartens concern the belief that parents are not interested in participating in the work of the kindergarten, that they do not have time to participate, or are not interested in leadership roles. It is important to be aware and reconsider your views.

Professionals may often have false expectations and expect too much from families. They may think that all families can and must collaborate and participate equally; or expect families to become and act like professionals at home, to “work” with their child, etc.

Sometimes professionals may get too emotionally involved. It is important that you empathize with parents and families, but professional expertise must always prevail; Good relationship and involvement of parents doesn't mean that you become friend with the parents or to take the role of a psychologist, counselor or even of a pediatrician.

Healthy boundaries of the professional role bring security and predictability in relationships.

The belief that parents want the best for their children but that they are not always capable of doing so is a good starting point for working with parents.

However, one should be aware that only an open attitude towards parents and families will not lead to the successful involvement of parents in the work and decision-making in the pre-school institution. Professional processes of cooperation and conversation require a combination of self-reflection, scientific knowledge, and new perspectives.

It is also interesting to consider how parents view professionals and how they would like to be treated by professionals from kindergartens.

- Parents want someone who cares about them and their children.
- Parents want respect and to be seen as an effective member of the child’s education team.
- Parents want to have a part in shaping the agenda that impacts them.
- They want to see their ideas respected and used in creating quality care environments.
- Parents want competent early childhood professionals who deliver the services effectively and in ways that truly meet their needs.
- Parents want to be a part of a relationship that is collaborative and communicative.
- They want a close relationship with early childhood professionals.ⁱⁱⁱ

These findings stress the high expectations parents have of professionals; they want practitioners to be caring and competent. At the same time, parents emphasize that they want to be involved and seek a relationship and partnership with professionals. It is essential to inform, explain and justify the educational project of the preschool to the families.

Looking inward as an intentional practice is a valuable exercise in a group

. Through team discussions we can become aware of our own and others’ experiences, hopes, fears and concerns.

Group reflective activity
Think back to your own childhood and own experiences in life. How might these past experiences, positive or negative, shape your beliefs, as a professional, about parent and family involvement?
What fears, hesitation do you have about working with parents or parental involvement?
In your practice so far, which of your beliefs about parents have proved to be incorrect?
What passions, beliefs, and strengths do you have that will help you involve parents?

Recommendation:

Dr. Karen Mapp on Reframing Our View About Our Families

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqHMNT2UtW0>

2.2. Where to start

„Too often, we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around. It's overwhelming to consider the continuous opportunities there are to make our love felt.”

-Leo Buscaglia

Whether you are organizing a parent meeting or workshops for parents, the most fundamental and critical intervention for children and families is to **develop trust**.

Margolis and Brannigan^{iv} captured this notion when they wrote this: To build trust, you need to:

- (a) cultivate a cooperative rather than a competitive or dominating mindset;
- (b) make your involvement with parents understanding and concerned;
- (c) be open about your objectives;
- (d) subtly demonstrate expertise without being oppressive or signaling superiority.

Building trust cannot be rushed. It is an interactive process involving the sharing of information, ideas, and feelings. The operative word in trust-building is reciprocity. It is important to share rather than conceal your feelings. Thoughts, however, should be expressed in ways parents can understand and appreciate.

Think about all levels of parental involvement in pre-school: (Information, consultation, joint decision-making, joint action). Look at the situation in your institution from the first contact of the parents with the institution - site, information, and enrollment service until the child is withdrawn from kindergarten.

The first step to involving parents in work and decision-making is encouraging them to enroll their child in kindergarten. A significant number of parents do not know what the functions are and what is the importance of pre-school institutions other than babysitting.

Be transparent and let parents know all relevant information about preschool by displaying posters, **putting information on your website, social media, inviting partner organizations from the local community to sign parents to your service.**

- *Together with the parents of enrolled children, develop a parent handbook for new parents that will include all the necessary information, procedures, rules, forms, curriculum standards but also messages of support for new parents. Hold a launch event and include parents in organization and volunteering at the event. Publish the handbook on the website of kindergartens and social networks.*

- *Name a preschool contact person/s, to assist and support parents in their interactions with the preschool, Post a photo and contact of that person on the institution's website. Consider whether that person could record a couple of short videos to answer the most common questions parents have about the kindergarten enrollment procedure. Provide a translation of the video into the languages of national minorities and post it on the website and social networks.*

Keep in mind that involvement of parents is never one single event but a process! At this stage, parents need help to understand what is offered in kindergarten and why this service is good for their child and family.

The nature and level of support which professionals offer in this process vary with the different steps and the way in which parents generally access different services. Some parents are very independent, and basic information on, for example, a website can be sufficient for them. Other families, especially families at risk, need more encouragement to get involved, which may mean professionals have to talk to the family on a few occasions.

Good advice is to estimate the parents' level of sophistication regarding each topic on the agenda so that you do not patronize or overwhelm them with the information they cannot comprehend.^y (Thompson, R. 2006)

Once a child and families access kindergarten, professionals have to continue to develop the relationship with parents, which can lead to the development of cooperation with them.

If there was a simple "formula" for involving parents in the work of the kindergarten, it would, conditionally speaking, look like this:

1. **Map:** identify what you are already doing.
2. **Plan:** identify the desired impact of family engagement strategies and how this can be measured.
3. **Implement:** do planned activities and collect information on outcome indicators.
4. **Evaluate:** assess collected information, draw conclusions about outcomes.
5. **Review:** communicate impact, use the findings for improving or changing planned strategies or actions.

In order to create the conditions that enable effective and sustainable involvement of parents some supporting structures should be active at both preschool institution level and level of an individual group.

For example, we suggest:

- **To organize action teams to plan, implement and evaluate parental involvement. This may include establishing new team or using an existing working group;**
- Coordinate preschool internal policies and procedures which explicitly state and integrate practices and principles of parental involvement;

- Apply and evaluate the principles and practices of parental involvement and individually by different sectors in the preschool and at the level of the educational group;
- Built support networks in local community and wider to share ideas, issues and best practice.

2.2.1. Developing trust among professionals in team

Fostering trust within your professional community is crucial and often a first step for meaningful growth and collaboration with parents and families. Trust that professionals build within a team can serve as a strong foundation for achieving the goals of actively involving parents in the work and decision-making in the preschool. In order to initiate positive change, it's essential to recognize and tap into the potentials and resources within your institution. This serves as a strong foundation for initiating work and planning cooperative efforts with parents.

Explore four key attributes of trust in relationships and reflect on your own experiences within your preschool:

1. Respect for Diversity

Trust is built on respect, which is born out of social interactions. It involves genuine interest and active listening to different perspectives, even in the face of disagreements. When individuals feel respected, even in conflict, it fosters an environment where people value each other. Without interpersonal respect, there's a risk of avoidance or unhealthy external conflicts.

- How does your preschool organization recognize individual dignity and diverse ideas in practice?
- Do you believe your colleagues actively listen to each other? How do you gauge this?
- Think about recent conflicts among colleagues. What occurred, and how were these resolved? What lessons were learned?
- Is there polite communication among colleagues, and how do you express kindness towards them?

2. Personal Consideration

We trust those who go beyond their formal responsibilities and job roles, demonstrating goodwill and a lack of intent to harm.

- Can you recall instances where a colleague went above and beyond their job requirements for you?

- When have you extended your own role's boundaries for the benefit of your team or organization?

- Do you sense that your colleagues care about your professional and personal well-being, and do you reciprocate this care?

3. Competence

In a kindergarten community, trust is closely tied to each person's ability to fulfill their role effectively. The achievement of shared goals hinges on the competence of every team member. Any perception of a lack of skills, knowledge, or willingness to fulfill one's role can erode trust. Negligence or incompetence, if left unaddressed, can further undermine trust.

- Are your colleagues seen as willing and capable of efficiently carrying out their job responsibilities?

- Are there any doubts about the competence of certain colleagues or superiors?

- Identify colleagues for whom you have reservations about their competence. What percentage of the total workforce does this represent?

- Are you concerned that your colleagues may question your competence, and how can you address this?

4. Personal Integrity

Integrity is the foundation of trust; it hinges on the belief that others will honor their commitments and maintain both personal and professional integrity. It also entails adherence to moral and ethical principles, even when individual interests conflict within the school setting. The well-being of children must remain a paramount concern, even amid such conflicts.

Building relational trust is an ongoing process, but by reflecting on these attributes, you can contribute to a more open and collaborative professional environment. It is through trust that lasting change and progress can be achieved.

Reflective exercise

In pairs, answer the following questions.

- Talk about someone you really trust. What makes you trust this person? How did this trust develop?
- How does it feel to really trust someone?
- How did you learn about trust as a child — e.g. trust in relation to peers?

- Do you have experience, as an adult, when trust was broken? And when did your actions undermine another's trust in you? What are those experiences like for you?
- What are your personal beliefs about trust? Is it hard to build? Easy?
- Is it harder to build with people who don't share your race or ethnicity, your background, your gender?
- Write about someone you have recently begun to trust - perhaps a colleague, boss, or friend. Describe how this trust developed - what did that person do? What have you done?
- What allows this trust to grow? Why that person and not someone else? What could someone do that would diminish your trust in him or her?

2.3. Mapping

Takeout note: Map, Plan, Do, Assess, Review

Map both **existing forms of parental involvement and potential** in order to clarify current efforts as a basis for determining what are first steps in planning parental involvement.

Also, mapping can help you connect resources involved in your preschool with resources in the community (including formal and informal organizations such as health and social services, NGO, sports clubs, cultures clubs etc. as well as businesses, governance bodies, and institutions.

Pay special attention to:

- Clarifying what resources are already available
- How the resources are organized to work together
- What procedures are in place for enhancing resource usefulness

This type of self-study is best done by teams. Educators initially might work separately in filling the checklist but the real benefit comes from discussing it as a group.

During the year, each educator can several times map the situation in his / her group, independently and in relation to the parents of the enrolled children.

A checklist organizes items in a systematic manner and provides you an **overview of what tasks you should accomplish or take into consideration** instead of relying on your memory.

MAPPING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT CHECKLIST	
Task	Status

Analysis of the existing legal framework and bylaws (recommendations, manuals ...)	
Analysis of internal acts of the institution (statute, decisions, plans)	
Have a clear picture of your community (structure and needs of the population and how does that apply to the preschool?)	
Have a clear picture on the family status of enrolled children. Considered all forms of diversity, such as socio-economic, ethnic and cultural, linguistic, disability, and family definition (e.g. foster families, teen parent families)	
List specific activities that encourage parental involvement in your institution.	
List existing parental involvement processes and practices and activities.	
Analyze ways to monitor planned parental involvement activities. Highlight the indicators you are monitoring.	
List ways to evaluate parental involvement processes and activities.	
Analyze how professional development of employees supports parental involvement processes (specify specific trainings, seminars)	
Analyze the degree of your connection with preschool institutions from other cities, countries, with professional associations	
Analyze the needs of employees for additional education (eg. work with “difficult” parents, support for children and families at risk...)	
Notice how and when is parental involvement a recognised topic of team meetings.	
Analise how is concept and practice of parental involvement inducted of new staff	
Analise how does the preschool recognise and support parent volunteers	
List the actions how preschool celebrate events that matter to the community, such as significant cultural days?	
Analise appropriate and effective communication channels you use to reach parents	
Analise obstacles to parental involvement	
List previous ways to overcome barriers to parental involvement	
Identify someone of the staff members who has been successful in engaging diverse families before, either at preschool or elsewhere. List the most specific principles and procedures that lead to success in cooperation with parents.	
Identify influential in the community who could help promote family engagement activities?	
Find a staff member who will be able to bring the perspectives of educators and other staff in preschool to the influential in the community.	
Identify parent or family members that could bring their perspectives (e.g. Special Education, English learner programs).	
Identify prospective ‘parent leaders’ who are representative of diverse families in your preschool.	
Map institutions, organizations in the local community that support children and families.	
Analyze the current cooperation with institutions and organizations in the local community. Create indicators of cooperation success.	

Analyze ways preschool support educators and parents need to use various forms of media (including online and social media) appropriately and effectively?	
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2.3.1 Identify obstacles in parental involvement

An important part of mapping is the discussion and identification of obstacles that could stand in the way of involving parents in the work of preschool.

Consider some of the barriers to parent involvement practices – have you noticed often comments made about this topic? Have you ever heard yourself or other colleagues make similar comments? How could you counteract some of these?

OBSTACLES IN PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	
Unhelpful thinking	What to do?
Parents don't care/aren't interested	<p>Some parents are interested in their child but may not be interested in interacting with the preschool. There is a difference between these two.</p> <p>In some families, a parent's engagement in a child's life is more likely to happen at home through play and conversation, during times when families are together. Professionals might not 'see' this.</p> <p>Some parents may not be aware of the different types of involvement that exist. Parents may have various fears of criticism from professionals, or they may not be sure what expectations professionals have of them.</p> <p>Consider different approaches for informing and involving different parents and families. Invest time in talking to parents about these topics.</p>
Parents don't show up, or the same people show up each time	<p>Carefully consider the timing, dates, and availability of information for the various activities you organize.</p> <p>When parents who regularly attend are available, inquire why other parents might not be participating. Be sure to approach parents with sensitivity when seeking their input (first, invest time in building a relationship).</p>

<p>Parents only contact us when here's a problem</p>	<p>Many parents may feel the same way when professionals from preschool contact them!</p> <p>This can indicate that they are not sufficiently familiar with the purpose of being involved in the activities of kindergartens. Involving parents always necessitates systematic, planned, regular, ongoing, and purposeful interactions between parents and professionals.</p>
<p>Certain parents just won't engage. It's not in their culture.</p>	<p>It is a common stereotype that families facing social risk do not value education or are not interested in their children's development. These professional prejudices perpetuate the status quo in supporting at-risk families. Invest time in developing cultural competence and sensitivity to social diversity.</p> <p>Try to emphasize the importance of inclusivity and equity by discussing opportunities for all children with parents.</p>
<p>It is too much work for professionals/we don't have time.</p>	<p>Changes in work practices are an integral part of our work.</p> <p>Introducing innovation into your practice does not necessarily mean that you will work more, but it may entail working differently.</p> <p>Take time to reflect on why parental involvement is important, not only for the child and the parent, but also for you as a professional.</p>
<p>We don't know where to start</p>	<p>Start by building upon what you are already doing and make changes gradually.</p>
<p>We are already doing it.</p>	<p>That's correct. Some aspects of the parental involvement concept rely on your current practices.</p> <p>With new knowledge and the application of the manual, you will assess and enhance your own practices.</p>
<p>We do not have support.</p>	<p>Set aside time to reflect, both with your colleagues and independently, on the types of support available in your institution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of the available forms of support are you currently utilizing? • What additional support could you make use of? • What type of support would be beneficial in this situation?

2.4. Planing

Recommendation: Jenni Brasington How effective are your family engagement initiatives, strategies, and practices?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HP0ADQLu1zA>

By now, you've come to understand that parental involvement extends far beyond mere attendance at parent meetings. It's a realization that both professionals and parents, alongside other stakeholders, must actively acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to nurture and sustain meaningful relationships and engagement.

It's essential to keep in mind that professionals have a vital role in providing various stakeholders with the opportunity to build the capacity for effective partnerships. This is not just a responsibility; it's a commitment to fostering positive relationships with parents. Further insights into this topic can be found in Chapter 4.

Parent and family engagement, as we define it, is "an intentional and systemic partnership among educators, families, and community members. This partnership shares the responsibility for a child's preparation for school, work, and life, from infancy to young adulthood."

Here, we place emphasis on the terms '**intentional**' and '**systemic**' to underscore the importance of professionals, families, and other stakeholders working collaboratively. Kindergartens should proactively integrate this engagement into their professional goals for child learning and development.

A fundamental component of this approach is a strong commitment to a holistic perspective on parental involvement. **This commitment begins with conversations among all preschool staff – those who interact directly with parents and those who do not – about the value and meaning of parental involvement in the context of kindergarten's work and decision-making.**

The foundation for creating and nurturing a culture of relationship-based involvement lies in effective leadership. In practice, this means wholeheartedly supporting the kindergarten principal and board members.

Parental involvement in kindergartens operates on several levels, and planning and implementation need to be tailored to these diverse work levels, from the institutional to the group level.

Prior to planning and implementation, it is crucial to identify the core planning team and appoint a coordinator. Engage various professionals who work within the kindergarten. A

good starting point is to conduct a situational analysis for your country, assessing the impact of current policies and interventions within the framework of national laws.

Establishing a core planning team is essential to lead and execute the planning process for creating and fostering a culture of relationship-based parental involvement in your preschool.

The team should include representatives from all key stakeholders in your preschool, such as educators, professional associates, and professionals not directly involved with children and parents. It's also valuable to involve other members, like a parent representative, members of local community institutions, and board members.

Different sectors within the kindergarten may already possess assessment tools, and elements of parental involvement may have already been integrated into them.

Additionally, consider the transformative aspect of nurturing a culture of parental involvement. Research consistently demonstrates that engaging parents not only makes the roles of professionals more manageable but also more fulfilling.

There are numerous creative ways to approach this transformation. For instance, you can organize meetings or workshops with all professionals to discuss their understanding of parental involvement and their perception of the current environment. Create an environment that allows ample time and space to explore various aspects raised in these discussions. This process presents an excellent opportunity to collaboratively draft a vision statement with all staff, as detailed later in this section.

A pivotal element of these discussions is to reflect on potential obstacles to successful engagement with families. Dedicate time to discussing concerns or barriers to engaging with families and actively address these concerns.

Ensure that the purpose of parental involvement is crystal clear. In addition to providing fundamental information about the importance of involving parents in kindergarten work, define your objectives, explain the reasons behind the change, and articulate the desired practices you aim to implement. This clarity is indispensable, as a well-defined purpose leads to the strengthening of the kindergarten community and fosters the commitment of all team members.

Gradually, involve all stakeholders and conduct orientations to ensure that everyone aligns their understanding of the objectives at each stage of the process.

For more specific guidance on communication and building relationships with colleagues, you can refer to the fourth chapter of this handbook.

Guiding questions to generate some discussion among the team:

What is your experience with involving the parents in work and decision making in a kindergarten?

What works well?
What doesn't work as well?
What is most fulfilling about developing strong relationship with parents?
What is least fulfilling?
Which aspects of your work could benefit from parental involvement? Why?
Which aspects of your work could make applicability of parental involvement difficult? Why?

Takeout note for team!

- Brainstorm and agree actions
- Assign responsibilities
- Monitor the progress
- Evaluate
- Keep the doors open for new stakeholders, fresh ideas.
- Be flexible
- Celebrate successes!

If you are on the path of building relationships with your parents on your own without the systematic support of the kindergarten, don't worry. The information and knowledge from this handbook can be a support and a wind in the back on the way to involving parents in the work of your group.

What we definitely recommend as a great resource for practitioners is **Jesper Jul and Hele Jensen's book "From Obedience to Responsibility - Towards a New Culture of Education"**.

2.4.1. Developing a draft vision statement

Discussing the vision statement for family involvement in your preschool is a pivotal step in ensuring a clear and effective direction. Your vision statement will act as a guiding light throughout the process of engaging parents in the life of the kindergarten. It's a compass that provides a comprehensive view of what you aspire the parent involvement practice to be within your kindergarten.

For instance:

- Every parent's contribution is invaluable.
- Every parent has the potential to enhance the quality of our kindergarten.

- Every parent is easily accessible.

This exercise aims to crystallize your current thoughts, with the final version evolving in collaboration with all stakeholders in later stages of the process.

Consider the unique characteristics of your preschool's setting and context. Pose questions such as:

- When our preschool enjoys robust parental involvement, what will it look like?
- What kind of parental involvement practices do we envision?
- What should we prioritize as initial steps?
- What changes are necessary to bring this vision to life?

When involving other stakeholders, including parents and local community organizations, ponder on the following:

- What knowledge or skills will they acquire?
- How will they emotionally connect with this vision?
- What actions will they take to support it?

Once your vision statement is drafted, assess how it may be received:

- Will it resonate with all parents?
- If not, which parents might not connect with it, and why?

A well-crafted vision statement has the power to unite, inspire, and drive positive change in your preschool's family involvement practices. It is the cornerstone upon which collaborative efforts can be built.

Recommendation: Dr Heather B. Weiss Envisioning and building family and community engagement 2.0

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TI_xrDHWI2E

2.4.2. Checklist for planning the involvement of parents in work and decision-making in kindergarten

Offered checklist includes ADITIONAL important topics (and added clarifications) that you should pay attention to during the planning process.

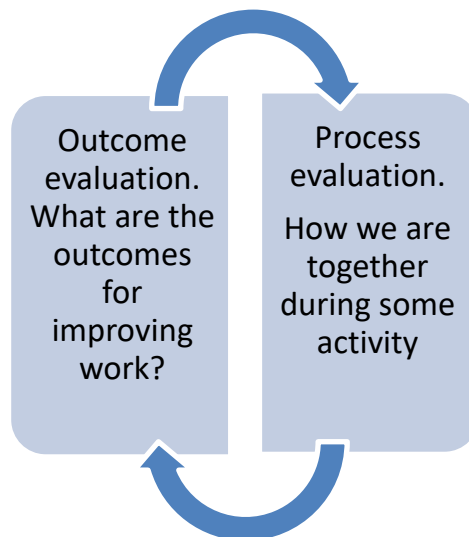
Planning the involvement of parents in work and decision-making in kindergarten		
TASK	CLARIFIATION	STATUS
Plan together, implement by sector	Keep in mind that the first contact of a parent with a kindergarten is often	

	<p>when enrolling a child in kindergarten. Then, if not even before, your cooperation and involvement of parents should begin. Facilitate this by ensuring that each sector is fully engaged in planning parental involvement and that each will implement the activities for which they are responsible. Have a clear expectation of what is, and is not, expected of different staff members in relation to parent involvement, and ensure that corresponding amounts of time are available.</p>	
<p>Set realistic and measurable goals and interventions that are useful for child, parents and families.</p>	<p>It is good to build on what already exists.</p> <p>Choose a limited number of goals for activities. Select them so that they are flexible and useful for children, parents, families, and the kindergarten, and ensure that the resources needed are in accordance with the resources you possess.</p>	
<p>Work in cycles</p>	<p>Whether you are developing a short-term plan or a longer-term strategic plan, you will assess the current situation, define the interventions, review progress, and seek ways to strengthen or change existing interventions.</p> <p>Keep in mind that planning is not a one-time act, but the cycle will be repeated during the working year in accordance with the specific context of the institution and the group.</p>	
<p>Ask parents!</p>	<p>Develop a systematic approach to ensure parental views are listened to and acted upon, and the kindergarten regularly feeds back to parents and seeks further feedback on action taken.</p>	

<p>Separate the levels of parental involvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing • Consulting • Joint decision making • Working together <p>These levels often intertwine, but it's good to keep them in mind when planning.</p>	
<p>Develop the approach for including new stakeholders</p>	<p>Discuss how you will include in the process of involving parents in the work of the kindergarten new parents whose child enrolls in the group during the working year or new educators, etc.</p>	
<p>Have a timeline for accomplishing each strategy and plans for monitoring progress and making revisions.</p>	<p>Look for opportunities to monitor and evaluate in different sectors.</p>	
<p>Celebrate success!</p>		

2.5.

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Evaluation

Evaluation can be conducted throughout the year in the form of periodic progress checks and at the end of the year as an annual assessment. **Our**

recommendation is to perform both, meaning to monitor the inception, progression, and culmination of an activity through a continuous evaluation of its outcomes. The information and insights gleaned from the team's reflection should be shared with families and the wider school community to gather their feedback and to further strengthen the trust between professionals and parents.

You can use **process evaluation** to gain feedback that can be used immediately to adjust or improve activities during the year.

Some questions for reflection on process can include:

1. Are we doing what we agreed to do?
2. If the planned activities are not being implemented, why not? Are there problems with outreach, logistics, or other factors?
3. What are you satisfied with in planned activity so far?
4. What are you not satisfied with in planned activity so far?
5. Are you getting what you expect?
6. What could you change at the moment?
7. How could you to proceed?
8. What surprised you?
9. What you did not expect?
10. What helped you?
11. What bothered you?
12. What are you going to do again?

Some questions for the evaluation of outcomes can include:

1. What has changed in your immediate work with children due to activities involving parents?
2. What has changed in your immediate relationship with parents due to activities involving parents?
3. What has changed in your relationship with colleagues due to activities involving parents?
4. If you have noticed any other changes in your work, whether positive or negative, please list them as specifically as possible.
5. If the activities did not yield the desired outcomes, what obstacles were encountered?
6. Have you increased your relevant knowledge and skills in the field of building relationships with parents?
7. What are some indications that parent involvement activities may be benefiting children? In what aspects do you see development?

8. How effectively are you reaching the intended parents?

Also, don't forget self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is crucial for preschool educators in assessing their work. It helps them identify strengths and areas for improvement, ultimately enhancing the quality of early childhood education. In this context, tools for self-evaluation can be found in the resources mentioned in the manual, facilitating professional growth and development.

Plan, Do, Assess, Review

Keep in mind...

- Both types of evaluation can be conducted after each meeting (or activity with parents), at the end of the semester, or at some other designated time.
- It is beneficial to combine written evaluation, which allows participants to delve into and reflect on their experiences (and avoid "me too" responses), with oral evaluation that provides participants with the opportunity to reflect on their feelings, expectations, thoughts, and to make plans for the future.
- If a written evaluation is conducted, the group should determine the person(s) responsible for processing the data. It is important that this person is willing to undertake the task and does not necessarily have to be a professional associate.
- If the data collected through the evaluation are to be used for writing a professional paper or a similar purpose, written consent from the parents is necessary.

2.5.1. Surveys

Surveys are powerful tools that gives professionals the opportunity to measure whatever you think is important on a regular basis.

Pulse surveys are a method for measuring feedback using shorter, more frequent check-ins, that's not bound to measuring specific topics or content. Pulse survey is effective because it is short and easy to complete and give you different perspectives on subjects such as cooperation, involvement of parents, communication, time functionality, needs etc. They can be uses wit all stakeholders in process of parental involvement in work and decision making in preschool.

This means that the content being measured can (and should) change from kindergarten to kindergarten and even from one survey to the next.

Benefits of Pulse surveys:

- Show interest in parents perspective (point of view and also understanding of certain professional concepts like parents involvement in decision making).

- Track the same item over time, e.g. “Would you prefer to join a workshop or a lecture about...?”
- They are short and easy to complete (can be distributed online via google form or viber, whats up)
- Data is easy to process.
- They can be used more frequently.

Remember that not everyone will agree to respond to a survey (for various reasons). Collected data only represents those who did respond, consider whether those motivated to respond may hold different perspectives to those who did not participate.

We might think that our focus is on what the survey tells us, but it is just as important to consider what the survey doesn't tell?

It may be useful to host discussion groups for parents and families to discuss the survey findings so that you might hear from a wider range of perspectives and can use the results to gain even more perspectives on certain topic.

Key factors that should be considered to ensure you get the most out of the survey.	
LENGHT	Too many questions lead to fatigue in answering so it is important for survey to be brief.
TIME	Carefully consider the time of survey, keep in mind holidays, end of the week... also, consider for how long will the survey be open for answers.
VOLUNTARY AND CONFIDENTIAL	Send clear message that participation is voluntary and confidential; that there are no wrong or right answers; and that choosing to participate in survey will not influence their child in any way.
ACCESSIBILITY	Be flexible with your accessibility options and provide your survey in multiple formats (online, in paper, oral). Consider translating surveys into relevant languages for different families.

2.6. Organization of group meetings for parents

The following chapters (up to Chapter 3) will provide you with the relevant information needed to organize and lead group meetings for parents.

Before we go into the details of organizing group meetings with parents, it is important to underline the importance of communication with parents, which is the basis for quality relationships and involvement of parents in the work of kindergartens.

In the fourth part of the manual, you can read more about communication techniques, and throughout the manual, assertive communication is the foundation on which we recommend that professionals build relationships with parents.

Assertive communication is a style of communication in which individuals can clearly express their opinions, attitudes and feelings, as well as advocate for their rights, without violating the needs and rights of others. While they treat others with respect and respect, assertive communicators value their needs and do not give up on them. This form of communication can include different behaviors and feelings:

- expressing one's own thoughts and feelings through "I-speech"
- active listening without interrupting the interlocutor
- maintaining eye contact
- calm tone during the conversation
- a sense of competence and keeping the situation under control
- advocacy
- relaxed body language and nonverbal communication
- a sense of control over one's own behavior
- a sense of connection with others

Being assertive doesn't just mean learning new skills and communicating better: assertiveness is a key skill in controlling your emotions and managing stress. Mastering this skill can help you increase your self-esteem, self-confidence and build relationships based on mutual respect. Therefore, assertiveness has a high potential to increase the quality of your life.

Key considerations for fostering assertive communication in kindergarten include:

- Communication is “two-way street”: can be initiated and directed by both parents and professionals.
- Face-to-face communication: professionals create opportunities for parents to engage in open, face-to-face (or online).
- Communication is regular and sustained: this is important to maintain connection and contributes to parents’ perception of feeling valued and sense that they can influence their child’s development and learning.

- Appropriate language: Professionals does not assume a certain level of knowledge that parents may not have. They adapt their language to different cultural context, minimize or explain professional terminology.
- Professionals use multiple channels for communication and information.

2.6.1. Examine the needs

1. Take every opportunity to assess the needs of parents.

- To start the process, it's essential to gain a deep understanding of the parents' needs, concerns, and preferences. This can be achieved through various means:
 - Create user-friendly questionnaires and surveys using platforms like Viber, Facebook, email, or the institution's website.
 - Ensure that these questionnaires are succinct and easy to complete.
 - Collect and analyze the feedback diligently to identify common themes and concerns that parents express.

2. Tailoring content to address concerns

- Once you've gathered insights from parents, it's time to use that valuable information to tailor your approach:
 - Plan your group meetings and workshops **around the issues and questions raised by parents.**
 - As professionals, you can identify challenges that parents may not even be aware of yet. Addressing these concerns will demonstrate your commitment to their well-being and success.

3. Crafting engaging meeting topics

- To capture the interest of parents, it's crucial to offer topics that are both relevant and engaging:
 - Identify subjects that directly pertain to the challenges and queries expressed by parents.
 - Share informative content through multiple communication channels such as bulletin boards, newsletters, and social media platforms.

4. Be Mindful of titles

- The choice of words can significantly impact the perception of your meetings:
 - Avoid titles that may inadvertently convey a sense of inadequacy or judgment. For example, "Parenting school" may imply that parents lack knowledge or competence.
 - Ensure your titles reflect a positive, learning-oriented approach.

5. Provide practical solutions

- In your event descriptions, focus on offering tangible solutions to the issues parents face:
 - Emphasize the value that parents will gain by attending. What will they learn, and how will it help them in their parenting journey?
 - Make it clear why it is essential for them to participate in these events.

6. Use clear and accessible language

- Effective communication hinges on speaking language that all parties can understand:
- Communicate in a language that resonates with parents, avoiding professional jargon.
- Use phrases that parents typically use to describe their challenges and concerns.

7. Involve parents in planning

- Show your commitment to collaboration by involving parents in the planning process:
- Allow parents to have a say in setting the time frame for meetings. Ask for their input regarding preferred meeting times and the ideal duration for workshops.

8. Demonstrating respect

- **It's crucial to understand that while you may not be able to fulfill every request, showing genuine interest in parents' needs conveys respect:**
- Demonstrating your willingness to listen and consider their input can leave a lasting positive impression.

2.6.2. Form a group

1. A relevant topic and a good title are not enough to form a group of parents.

- Don't be afraid to address some parents, one by one. Say in a few words what you are planning and why it is important. Ask parents: What do you say about our topic? Do you have any ideas? Who else do you think we should ask?
- Create personalized invitations or messages for parents. Address them by their names and mention their child by name as well. This personal touch can make parents feel valued and more likely to attend.
- Emphasize the unique benefits of the event for their child's development and academic progress.
- Share success stories or testimonials from other parents who have participated in similar activities to showcase the positive impact.

2. Parent ambassador program

- Establish a "Parent Ambassador" program where enthusiastic and engaged parents, especially those who have previously attended and enjoyed events, volunteer to encourage other parents to participate.
- These ambassadors can share their positive experiences, answer questions, and provide reassurance to hesitant parents.
- Encourage ambassadors to connect with parents through phone calls, texts, or social media, and invite them personally to upcoming activities.

This approach is very similar to the basics of community social work. First, look for those who are interested in being involved. With them, create a "core" through them. Those parents can help you raise awareness dissemination and even subsequent implementation.¹

3. Foster inclusive approach

- Recognize the challenges that parents from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds may face, such as limited resources or time constraints.
- Collaborate with local community organizations or charities to provide additional support, like transportation/childcare services/ volunteers, to make it easier for these parents to attend.

2.6.3. During the meeting/workshop

Get there at least half an hour early.

1. Welcome the parents.

- Address them by name. If possible, provide name tags or post-it papers on which the names of the participants will be written.

2. Prepare the space for work.

- Consider creating a warm and inviting entrance to the workshop area, so parents feel welcomed from the moment they arrive.
- Take into consideration a specific event, whether it's a workshop involving both children and parents or a meeting intended for parents only.
 - Be flexible for different seating arrangements that can be adapted to the needs of each workshop. For instance, use movable chairs and tables that can be arranged in various configurations. Don't insist on circular chairs sitting position,
 - Ensure that the seating allows for both group discussions and individual activities, as some workshops may require different formats.
 - Equip the space with essential visual aids, like whiteboards, flip charts, or screens for presentations.
 - Make sure there are enough supplies and materials for interactive activities and demonstrations.
 - Create a comfortable atmosphere by providing seating with cushions or ergonomic chairs, and ensure proper lighting. If you are able to provide large chairs for all parents.
 - Make sure that discussions are not overheard by others in adjacent spaces.
 - Establish a feedback system, such as suggestion boxes or online surveys, to gather input from parents regarding the workshop space and overall experience.

¹ Ruch, G. et al (2010). Relationship-based social work: getting to the heart of practice. London: Jessica Kingsley publishers

3. Always be aware of the level of knowledge, capacity, and other specifics of the group participants and adapt to the level of the group.

4. Adjust the technique. Visualize what you say.

- Some limited use of slides, for example, questions to parents, workshop instructions, sentence phrases, drawings, pictures, animations, short films, short videos, etc., can be helpful as long as it does not detract from the engagement of participants.
- Avoid extensive PowerPoint presentations, as they tend to signal the moderator as an expert and can reduce discussion.

5. If possible, it is suggested to have two educators/professionals.

- If you are beginning with this kind of workshop, it's advisable to have two educators or professionals present. One educator can take the lead during the session or part of it, and is responsible for delivering the content, facilitating group engagement, and managing the associated activities. This educator should also be mindful of the session's timing.

- The second educator's role is to support the lead educator and play a more prominent role in encouraging active participation from group members. This includes monitoring group dynamics, being attentive to any challenges group members may face, such as difficulties in making their voices heard amidst louder participants. The second educator is especially attuned to signs of emotional distress among group members. If a participant needs to leave the session temporarily and requires support, it is typically the second educator who provides assistance.

- Furthermore, it's valuable if the educators are accessible during breaks, as some group members may wish to seek guidance or discuss topics they may not feel comfortable sharing with the entire group.

2.6.4. Ground rules for the professionals leading a group

- It is important that everyone's views are listened to, valued, and treated with respect. Parents need to feel comfortable asking questions of each other and of the educator, but care must always be taken that individuals do not become isolated or anxious. Show respect for others, particularly respecting differences and diversity.
- **Anti-discriminatory practice needs to be in evidence throughout every event.** Try to achieve a sense of welcome for participants from all cultures, backgrounds, and family types.
- **Do no harm. The participation of parents of children of risk must be carefully managed in order to minimize risks or negative consequences for those concerned.** It is important to be aware that opening up discussion about certain topics and concerns can be emotive and highly sensitive and must be carefully managed and

supported to ensure well-being of participants. - **Be aware that role play can be very helpful but also creates a lot of anxiety.** If there are self-confident members of the group, it can be helpful for facilitators to demonstrate some role play to explore experiences in relation to the topic being discussed.

- **Treat all workshops and all formal or informal discussions as confidential.** There may also be informal discussions during breaks, where professional, personal, or family matters are shared. It is very important that the privacy of individuals and families is respected.
- Some parenting dilemmas cannot be discussed in general terms, and so specific experiences and concerns need to be discussed during individual meetings. **It is the educator's responsibility to make sure that the group stays "on track," allowing some diversion but then gently guiding back to the current topic.**
- If there is large number of concepts and theories in the content of the meeting the educator will need to make a judgment about how much depth to go into. **Some parents can be put off by the extent of professional content (for example, laws and status). Stories, metaphors, personal anecdotes, and relating ideas to group members' experiences can all help to reduce the intellectual nature of sharing theory and to make it accessible to all.**
- **The goals of group meetings are best achieved when participants are actively engaged, with lots of discussions.** There will always be quieter group members, but the educator's responsibility is to make sure that all feel welcomed. It is hoped that quieter group members will make more use of small-group activities to make their own unique contributions. Combine working with the group as a whole with small-group activities. They can be useful to give quieter group members an opportunity to engage and also to provide some exploration of ideas at greater depth.
- Participation works best when facilitators are part of the group, sitting within the circle rather than standing at the front.^{vi} This collaborative approach acknowledges that professionals are not the sole experts. Both parents and educators possess valuable expertise to contribute to the group. Educators bear the responsibility of providing expertise related to the content and processes of the group, while parents bring their personal expertise stemming from their parenting experiences. It is the fusion of these various forms of expertise that empowers the group. Professionals continually learn alongside the participants.

2.7. Involvement of parents and families of children at risk in the work of kindergartens

There are five types of situations or events that may produce stress and, in turn, contribute to a state of family risk or crisis^{vii}:

1. **Family Situations** — a child abuse, spouse abuse, divorce, an unplanned pregnancy, a parent's desertion, child marriage, a chronically ill family member, and a lack of social supports due to religion, national or sexual minority.
2. **Economic Situations** — sudden or chronic financial strain, such as loss of employment, high medical expenses, economic migration, missed child support payments, poverty, money "lost" to gambling or drug addiction.
3. **Community Situations** — violence, inadequate housing, a lack of community resources, inadequate educational programs, lack of public transport.
4. **Significant Life Events** — events that most view as happy, such as a marriage, the birth of a child, a job promotion, or retirement, can trigger a crisis in a family; a child enrolling in school, the behaviors of an adolescent, a grown child leaving home, the onset of menopause, or the death of a loved one can also be very stressful life events.
5. **Natural Elements** — disasters such as floods, hurricanes, fires, and earthquakes, or even extended periods of high heat and humidity, or gloomy or excessively cold weather.

Difficulties in Coping - individual's or a family's ability to deal with a crisis situation is influenced by their physical and behavioral characteristics and their attitudes and beliefs. Even families with generally happy lives and support networks can become overwhelmed by stressful events. For example, poor physical health, a low level of personal energy, an overly sensitive temperament, and mistrust of community service providers set the stage for difficulty in coping with a crisis.

When we evaluate families facing potential risks, we can sort them into three distinct categories:

- Families and children at minimal or low risk,

- Families and children at a moderate level of risk, and
- Families and children at a high risk, or those who have previously demonstrated risky behavior.

It's crucial to keep in mind that, beyond parents' own upbringing and personality traits, environmental factors play a significant and detrimental role in the successful execution of their parental duties.

The quality of parental care can be **significantly undermined by a range of environmental factors, primarily including poverty, unemployment, vulnerability, and exposure to various stressors**. A parent may struggle to provide adequate care if they lack even the most basic environmental conditions. For instance, being homeless, experiencing hunger, or living in a war-torn environment poses significant challenges for a parent in terms of emerging from such unfavorable conditions.

These challenges hinder their ability to manage stress effectively, act spontaneously, maintain a sense of balance, and harmonize their actions and behaviors with the child's needs. Achieving optimal growth and development for the child depends on parental affection, love, and quality parenting.

What numerous studies confirm is the importance of a cooperative approach to parental involvement and highlights the guidelines:

- Approach at-risk parents with the premise that no single race, religion, culture, or ethnic group holds a monopoly.
- Recognize that all families have strengths. Successful programs reinforce these strengths. Focusing on deficits or failures is counterproductive.
- Start with the assumption that most parents care deeply about their children yet may not know how to help.
- Teach parents to overcome obstacles and to learn new techniques, such as helping with homework, teaching children to be more responsible, and developing boundaries and family rules.
- Ask parents what they are interested in doing, focusing on their agenda first. (Thompson, R. 2006).

2.7.1. Communication "tools."

Techniques such as humor, normalisation, self-disclosure, storytelling, limit-setting, and instillation of hope are effective when working with parents and families in risk. It must be borne in mind that these techniques must be accompanied by an attitude of openness, interest, and support of the individual and family.

- Use of Humor

Good professional role models demonstrate a **moderate fun-loving sense of humor from time to time**. Many parents have lost interest in fun and joy due to range of risk factors.

It is also helpful for parents if professionals responded to their own mistakes with humor. This helps parents relax and realize that professionals are not perfect that they make mistakes too.

Words of caution: Always keep in mind the cultural differences in humor. Some parents are prone to the concrete interpretation of humor. Some parents can interpretate humor as teasing. Be cultured and take care of the appropriateness of your humor.

- Normalization

As said before, normalization is good technique to use with parents. Saying "we all get angry and don't know how to express it sometimes" is more effective than implying that parents get angry and professionals never do.

Self-Disclosure and Storytelling

Parent and families in risk need positive role models, but they are relieved to know that professionals are human and sometimes struggle with emotions. Tell a story how someone else overcame similar problems, may be helpful to parent.

But don't forget, professionals focus on the parent' needs rather than vent personal frustrations. Ask yourself honestly, "Am I doing this for my benefit or is it for the parent' benefit?"

Setting Limits

Our model of involvement of parents emphasize respect for the families' culture and value systems. It respects the child and family's needs rather than imposing the kindergarten needs on the family.

This, however doesn't mean respecting inappropriate behavior. it may be necessary for professional to say specifically and directly what behaviors are never acceptable.

Certain parents misinterpret professional acceptance of them as full agreement with their abusive actions. It may be necessary to frequently emphasize that actions such as child maltreatment are never acceptable behaviors.

In kindergarten settings, it is crucial to establish clear boundaries and communicate effectively to ensure that parents understand the unacceptability of abusive actions and are encouraged to make positive changes in their parenting approaches.

Professional should also always take **care of their personal boundaries** and take care of their integrity. In that way, professional is being a role model for parents.

Instilling Hope

If parents senses that a professional believes positive change is possible, then family members begin to feel confident in their ability to bring about change.

When parents are encouraged to try a new approach, rather than being blamed for failure, hope springs forth. Words such as "when" and "will" should be used rather than "if" or "maybe" when discussing plans.

Working Through Resistance

By objectively, nonjudgmentally, and respectfully focusing on family strengths and the immediate crisis, professionals can minimize client resistance during early intervention.

Professionals must be careful how they use their professional authority. If authority is misused, parents may experience a double message: Parents should not misuse power with their children, but professionals may misuse power with parents. Such double messages create confusion and resentment—more about resistances in section 2.9.

2.7.2. Additional recommendations

- Use appropriate terminology when addressing individuals, groups, or states. If you are uncertain, consult with the individuals or relevant organizations to determine the preferred terms for describing specific populations or conditions.
- It is essential to sensitize both parents of children with disabilities and parents of typically developing children about the significance of inclusive practices in kindergarten. Incorporate photographs of children and parents with disabilities on the institution's official website, posters, and other materials.
- Gain a deeper understanding of the impact of trauma on the behavior of individuals and groups.
- Recognize the needs of parents with children at risk and identify areas of concern within their families.
- Organize information and discussion sessions with families to address issues related to diversity, equality, and anti-discrimination, initiating conversations about their concerns.
- Create a notice board for parents, featuring general information, examples of children's work, photographs, and content in various languages or visual aids for parents with limited literacy skills.

- Families and individuals may experience feelings of apprehension and isolation when faced with unfamiliar cultures and services.
- Parents of children at risk might encounter challenges in sharing personal information. Ensure transparency in the procedures for collecting and safeguarding documentation, assuring them of data confidentiality.
- It's common for parents of children at risk to have experienced institutional abuse and, consequently, to have a lack of trust in institutions and the professionals working within them.
- Families may hold diverse beliefs and attitudes regarding the causes of illness, developmental delays, injuries, or the terminology used to describe body parts, illnesses, and symptoms.
- Furthermore, it's important to encourage open dialogue with parents to address their specific concerns and foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for all children and families involved.

2.8. When problems arise

Takeaway message: Iron is forged while it is COLD

2.8.1. Parents are unable to attend meetings or activities because of schedule conflicts (e.g., work, family, religious, and community activities)

Suggestions to address the challenge:

- Survey parents to determine the most convenient times and days for them.
- Schedule multiple meetings and activity opportunities.
- If possible, consider scheduling meetings and activities on a Saturday.
- Arrange meetings and activities after peak traffic hours.
- Avoid scheduling events that conflict with other significant community gatherings and religious holidays.
- Offer the option of online meetings.
- Provide recorded meetings accessible to all parents and the opportunity to ask questions in the days following the meeting.
- Ensure a range of opportunities and flexible time slots for parents to volunteer.
- Implement incentives to motivate parents to attend on-site meetings and events.
- Survey parents to identify barriers preventing their attendance at meetings.

- Provide alternative channels for parents to access information and communicate with the preschool, aside from attending meetings and activities (e.g., email, Facebook, Instagram, Viber).

Additionally, to further enhance parental engagement, consider exploring creative approaches to connect with parents, such as organizing workshops that focus on enhancing their relational skills and understanding family dynamics.

2.8.2. What to do if the group drops

Suggestions to address the challenge:

What if only a few parents come to a workshop/meeting?

- Conduct the workshop/meeting with the same intensity and faith.
- Ask what they think is the reason for such a lack of interest, what they suggest, that we will have more people next time, and whether you can count on them in the future.
- Discuss with your colleagues, about what happened, what you didn't do or could have done differently, what to change during the organization.
- It is important not to blame the parents blame. If you write the initial failures on their account, it can represent your resistance and inflexibility in working with your parents.

What if we see that parents are occasionally starting to drop out?

- Again, ask why. Examine. They've probably lost interest. This is not a problem, but only if you do something to change it.
- Take a pulse survey with parents
- Don't pass the problem on to parents. ("They're completely uninterested!" etc....) Keep in mind that those are your assumptions. Sometimes, there may be something in these assumptions but responsibility of a professional is to get parents interested in cooperation. To motivate them!

2.8.3. What to do when parents do not come to meetings

Suggestions to address the challenge:

- Identify the obstacles that hinder attendance at meetings (e.g., lack of transportation, language barriers, negative prior experiences).

- Take a proactive and flexible approach to reestablishing relationships with parents.
- Create opportunities for parents to become acquainted with professionals in a non-intimidating manner, such as hosting informal events.
- Avoid using professional terminology when communicating with families.
- Consider involving parents or, if appropriate, students as volunteer translators during school meetings and activities.
- Host online meetings with live streaming, like webinars.
- Produce a podcast of the meeting and archive it online for later reference.
- Organize carpools among parents.
- Seek sponsorship to provide bus tickets or other assistance.
- Establish connections with local institutions and organizations, including NGOs, community centers, social services, churches, and other professionals who can facilitate your connection with parents.

It's crucial to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment, especially when working with diverse communities, by embracing cultural sensitivity and open communication.

2.8.4. Conflicts

Takeaway message: Iron is forged while it is COLD

Conflict is the experience of discord among individuals and groups, where they perceive each other as a threat to their needs, values, or means.

In simpler terms, a conflict arises when two (or more) people have different desires, needs, or values simultaneously, or when they have the same desires, needs, or values at different times.

Interactions between people are a necessity and can equally lead to cooperation and conflict. Conflict can facilitate the development of relationships, but losing control of it can result in relationship breakdown. Conflicts can manifest in all types of relationships and occur at various levels of personal and social life.

In cooperative relationships, conflicts are inevitable. Therefore, it is crucial for educators to recognize conflicts, not shy away from them, and either resolve them in collaboration with parents or seek help and support from colleagues to address them.

Relationship disorders or conflicts can emerge at any point during cooperation with parents, but the highest risk for conflict development is during the initial phase of building a relationship. This is when establishing trust and defining cooperative goals and direction are crucial. Conflicts may vary in intensity and duration, ranging from minor and brief tensions, which often go unnoticed, to significant conflicts that can jeopardize the entire cooperative relationship.

Conflict presents both an obstacle and an opportunity for learning, benefiting both educators and parents.

2.8.5. Conflict resolution model

When a parent expresses anger, criticism, or neglect, it becomes challenging to expect educators not to experience some form of discomfort. It is crucial for educators to recognize this and take responsibility for themselves. This entails taking action to regain emotional balance, which can initiate the process of breaking free from the 'vicious circle.'

Self-reflection can be a helpful tool - instead of reacting defensively or aggressively, educators can articulate their feelings about the situation. For instance, they could say, 'I perceived your behavior (describing it specifically) as critical, and I noticed that it triggered my own anger. It seems like we're caught in a cycle of trying to prove ourselves...'

Additionally, self-reflection involves acknowledging and naming one's emotional states, such as saying, 'I clenched my jaw, which I often do when I'm angry.'

This approach accomplishes several goals:

1. It allows educators to reestablish a more conducive workspace that might have been compromised by negative emotions and creates a psychological distance from their own discomfort.
2. It provides parents with feedback on the dynamics between them, thus fostering shared responsibility for the relationship.
3. It supports parents in taking ownership of their words and actions.

In Appendix number 5 of this manual, you will find a model of group peer reflection (Colegial reflection) that can serve as a platform for practice and better understanding of conflict situations in working with parents and children.

2.9. Strategies for reducing parent resistance

Takeaway message: The iceberg is not melting with criticism but with warmth

Parents can frequently resist any effort at consultation. Resistance can be defined as denying the existence of a problem or as an emotional reaction to a situation. In both cases, there is little movement from a parent in the consultative relationship. The reasons for resistance are multiple and can include:

1. Prior negative experiences with schools, including a parent's own educational experiences.
2. Personal problems that overshadow the issues relating to the child's problems.
3. Philosophical differences such as "it's the school's problem, not mine."
4. Denial of the very existence of a problem.

Potential solutions to this gauntlet of resistance can be seen in a threefold approach:

1. Begin by listening to the presenting point-of-view of the parent. Every story can be reframed.
2. Reframe issues in terms of the strengths present or strengths created through education.
3. Make realistic, practical steps and summarize each mutually agreed commitment.
4. Listen to and respect each other's views.

Trust is an important link that is the basis for involving parents in the work of kindergartens and cooperation with professionals. At the same time, it is a very fragile link that is harder to make than to break. Also, sometimes it is much harder to fix than to create.

Trust is the belief of the parents that the professional will act in the best interest of his child and him and that he will not harm them in any way. **Parents trust in educators (and other professionals) is based on the ASSESSMENT of educators' diligence.**

Parental trust in educators covers a wide range from blind belief (often related to parents' beliefs in the authority of a professional role) to complete distrust. Most parents are somewhere in the middle of this continuum - they enter into a relationship with moderate trust, **which develops if there are VISIBLE SIGNS that speak of the reliability of educators and institutions.**

In order for a parent to be actively involved in the work of the kindergarten, it is often not enough for his trust to be based solely on reliability in the educator's relationship with the child (or cognitive understanding of why the process of cooperation with the kindergarten is important for the child) it is important for parent as individual to feel "seen", respected, recognized by a professional.

Parents try in different ways to find out if they can trust the educator. Especially in situations when they feel cheated, scared, threatened, worried. This may or may not have to do with real circumstances, it is a matter of subjective experience of a parent.

In order to build a relationship of cooperation with parents, it is necessary for the educator to recognize and adequately respond to the ways in which parents come to the mentioned signs. **We most often interpret these signs as PARENT RESISTANCE and give them a NEGATIVE SIGN.**

Parental resistance has its function, it is usually automatic and unconscious, and in its background is the need to "test" the relationship, or to get an answer to the question "Can I trust you"?

Resistance can occur at all stages of cooperation with a parent (both with parents with whom you are just establishing cooperation and with those with whom you already have a cooperation relationship). Resistance can arise at any time and is not only related to problems in cooperation.

Some of the ineffective ways in which professionals react in contact with a parent who resists are:

- Respond exclusively to the content (spoken words) without taking into account the process level of the message.
- Do nothing in the hope that the resistance will disappear.
- They blame their parents and engage in power struggles with them.
- They become impatient and hostile and show it verbally or non-verbally.
- Lower work criteria and expectations from cooperation with the parent.
- Take on the role of "victim" and (often unconsciously) allow the parent to cross their personal and professional boundaries.
- They give the parent the lead - the parent becomes the "leader"
- They give up on establishing a cooperative relationship with the parent.

These reactions will not reduce the resistance, they will only increase it!

It is important to note that educators in relation to a parent who shows resistance can feel confused, scared, hurt, guilty, in a panic... And often it is these unresolved unpleasant emotions that stand in the way of an adequate reaction of a professional.

Also, educators are primarily people, so resistance can occur in them as well, but it is the professional responsibility of educators to raise awareness and take active steps to overcome it.

Reflective exercise
In pairs, answer the following questions:
How do you most often react when you have the impression that someone is forcing you to do something? (in professional work)?
How do you usually deal with change?
What do you, most often, do then?

2.9.1. Embrace the resistance

Takeaway message: Pressure creates resistance

The appearance of resistance is normal and expected!

It is unrealistic to expect a complete lack of resistance. All people naturally resist change, even though it is an inevitability of life and relationships.

Parents can frequently resist effort to cooperate with preschool. Resistance can be defined as denying the existence of a problem or as an emotional reaction to a situation. The reasons for resistance are multiple and can include:

1. Prior negative experiences with preschools, including a parent's own educational experiences.
2. Personal problems that overshadow the issues relating to the child's problems.
3. Philosophical and value differences such as "it's their problem, not mine".
4. Denial of the very existence of a problem.

Potential solutions to this gauntlet of resistance can be seen in this approach:

1. Begin by listening to the presenting point-of-view of the parent. Every story can be reframed.
2. Confirm the feelings and attitudes of the parents.
3. Be aware of your resistance in contact with your parent.
4. Explain the process and importance of cooperation between parents and kindergarten.
5. Make sure your parents understand what you told them. Check it out!
6. Reconsider your expectations and previous interactions with the parent.
7. Make realistic, practical steps and summarize each mutually agreed commitment.

In the table, we have listed some of the most common examples of parental resistance and potential educator responses in similar situations.

Content: What parent do/say	Process: Hidden message	Potential solution
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<p>Searching for information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How old are you?</i> • <i>Are you married? Do you have children?</i> • <i>You are still young...</i> 	<p>Can you understand me, accept me?</p>	<p>Don't explain, don't justify yourself. Show that you are willing to understand your parent</p> <p>You can say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that I think I am too young to understand you? • I wonder if you are worried about whether we will understand each other given that I do not have children.
<p>Recognition of (personal) secrets</p> <p><i>Entrusting a personal or family secret that is usually associated with feelings of discomfort and often has nothing to do with the topic of conversation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>My husband has an illegitimate child with his mistress.</i> • <i>I was raped.</i> 	<p><i>May I open before you?</i></p>	<p>Don't judge, don't question further, don't defend yourself.</p> <p>Keep your response warm and neutral.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You look worried now that you've told me... • It seems to me that / it seems to you that it scares you / that you are calm while you say it.
<p>Search for special services</p> <p>(reasonable - in relation to the professional role of educators and unreasonable ones that go beyond the professional responsibilities of educators and kindergartens)</p>	<p><i>Are you reliable and honest?</i></p>	<p>Check how you feel! Do your parents' request make you angry, irritated, scared... be aware of your resistance.</p> <p>Whether you accept the service or not is much more important HOW you accept or reject it.</p> <p>If the request is reasonable - fill it in by the agreed deadline or ask a person who can help the parent.</p> <p>If it exceeds your professional</p>

		responsibilities - refuse Mildly, CLEARLY AND WITH EXPLANATION. Be honest, set a clear limit and do not mask the reason for rejection.
<p>Disparaging yourself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I am a bad mother.</i> • <i>I forgot to come again, I am terrible and I must have disappointed you.</i> 	<p><i>Can you accept me as I am?</i></p>	<p>Don't evaluate! For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, that's awful or • Not true, look at it from a brighter side. <p>Don't offer a solution, don't fix it!</p> <p>Respond in a neutral way, reflect and offer an opportunity to talk if the topic is within the scope of your professional responsibilities!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It seems to me that you are not satisfied with your relationship with the child, we can talk about everything that worries you about it.
<p>Bringing educators into an awkward situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring expensive gifts. • Suggest that an aunt come to talk to them instead - because she "knows everything" about the child. • Cancel an appointment for an individual interview. 	<p><i>Do you have boundaries and do you know how to keep them? Do you care about your self-esteem?</i></p>	<p>Set a clear structure of the relationship of cooperation with parents!</p> <p>Once again, explain your role, purpose, goal of cooperation, remind of agreements, point out the consequences of certain behaviors.</p> <p>When you care about your boundaries, you send a clear message to your parents that you will respect and care for their boundaries as well.</p>
<p>Check the motive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you extra paid for these afternoon workshops? 	<p><i>Do you really care? Or is this "just" a job for you?</i></p>	<p>We all need to be seen and accepted as unique human beings.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you so kind to everyone? • Where do you live? That is so far from here...and now you will come to kindergarten again this afternoon because of my child? 		<p>Remember, you work with a lot of parents, and they only work with you!</p> <p>Be honest and open, show real care for your parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "You're right, we work with a lot of parents and it's not always easy, but the beauty is that we learn something new from each parent that is important to our work."
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Reflective exercise
<p>In pairs, answer the following questions.</p>
<p>Remember specific situation when you noticed resistance to cooperation with parents?</p>
<p>What did you do then?</p>
<p>What would you do new based on the text you read about resistance?</p>

2.10. Feedback

For a child to develop adequately, it's crucial for adults to acknowledge and respect the child's integrity in relation to adults. Additionally, it's equally important for a child to receive feedback from adults, as it helps them comprehend their behavior and learn how it impacts others. This feedback provides the child with new insights about themselves, others, and the dynamics of relationships.

It's essential to remember that our need for feedback doesn't diminish as we grow up. Human beings are inherently social, and feedback from others significantly influences the quality of our various life roles, including our professional ones. Failing to "read" our environment leads to a lack of meaningful relationships.

Cooperation and parental involvement in kindergarten work always involve building relationships with parents. A productive collaborative relationship is a two-way exchange where we not only influence parents but also welcome feedback from them.

2.10.1. Giving Feedback

Takeout note: The goal of feedback is to provide information, not to change another person.

When effectively administered, feedback is a powerful way to increase motivation, develop cooperation, build knowledge and skills, increase skills and develop reflective habits. Sometimes, however, the feedback we give (and get) is ineffective or even counterproductive.

The interest in hearing feedback and the way we will receive (process and accept) it depends on who gives it to us and in what way. These are the features of positive feedback.

Positive feedback features:

- It must be based on what you observe, not on your assumptions or condemnation.
- It must be based on behavior, not personality
- It must be specific, not a general comment on behavior
- Your intention must be to help and understand the person who is behaving
- It must be clear, concise and timely
- It must be measured and correct (especially if you give feedback to a group of parents, then you should keep in mind all members of the group so that they too can understand or experience your feedback)

We must not forget that openness, the desire for change and understanding, restraint from the defense, calm listening or asking for additional explanation from the one who receives feedback are also important.

We cannot always influence parents and their capacity, interest in receiving or feedback skills

However, by learning about the qualities of positive feedback and developing professional skills for giving feedback, we can greatly increase the possibility of cooperation!

So it's a good idea to keep in mind:

- Feedback is a perspective, not the absolute truth about another individual.
- Provide information on what the parent is doing, rather than solely offering praise or criticism.
- Be mindful of how you deliver feedback.
- Center feedback around goals.

- Utilize feedback to enhance metacognitive skills. Discuss your relationship with the parent.
- Openness and offering support are helpful, while coercion is not.
- It's essential to foster a supportive and empathetic environment when working with parents to facilitate effective communication and growth.

Reflective exercise

In pairs, answer the following questions.

How do you give feedback?

In which situations is it easy for you to give feedback?

When do you avoid giving feedback?

What do you think is the worst thing that can happen when you give feedback?

2.10.2. Receiving feedback

The interest in receiving feedback and how we process and accept it depends on the source and the manner in which it is delivered. These aspects constitute the essence of positive feedback. Furthermore, we must emphasize the significance of openness, the willingness to embrace change, understanding, refraining from defensive reactions, and actively engaging in calm listening or seeking additional clarification from the person providing feedback.

Receiving feedback can expose vulnerabilities, and at times, we respond in various ways:

- **"Yes, yes, you are right"**: In this instance, we unconditionally yield to the other person, believing that it will help resolve the situation or conflict to avoid rejection in the relationship.

- **"You don't understand, I didn't think so"; "You should think about your behavior first before commenting on mine"**: These passive-aggressive or openly aggressive responses divert the focus from feedback, preventing constructive dialogue and the maintenance of relationships.

- **"I don't know what you're talking about ... I don't remember."; "Impossible, you didn't see/hear it correctly"**: Engaging in "gaslighting" reflects a desire to evade feedback at all costs, resulting in a denial of reality, memory, or perception, effectively avoiding the issue.

- **Shifting the conversation to a different topic** indicates disinterest in the other person and building a meaningful relationship. These are mechanisms we employ to shield our vulnerabilities.

Receiving feedback about ourselves can be challenging, often perceived as a critique of our very being, regardless of the delivery. Intense emotions might preoccupy our thoughts, hindering awareness and engagement in relationships. This may be particularly true if, during our upbringing, we invested significant effort into making ourselves appear accommodating and pleasing to others in professional relationships. Such feedback may evoke feelings of shame, embarrassment, or anxiety.

It's valuable to recognize that we can take steps to "bounce back" before continuing the dialogue:

- "It takes me a moment to regain composure...": Acknowledging your automatic response to criticism and expressing a willingness to listen.

Additionally, remember that feedback from others represents their perspective and does not define our entire identity. We can choose to accept a portion of it, without feeling obligated to internalize the entirety of the feedback offered.

Reflective exercise
In pairs, answer the following questions.
What are your typical ways of dealing with the feedback of close people? (partner, child, your parents)
And how do you deal with feedback in professional roles?
How do you react when your parents give you feedback, and how do you react when it comes to your manager? Where is the difference? How do you explain that?
How do you like to get feedback? What is the best way for you?

2.11. Remote cooperation

All preschool institutions and professionals have been forced to adapt the way they interact with and support children, parents and families over the past few years due to COVID pandemic. Metaphorically speaking, the pandemic pushed professionals into the unknown and forced you to develop skills and knowledge that you could not even imagine we would need (such as using video applications, online education, etc.).

While the relationships between parents and kindergartens have been strained over the past years— because of a lockdown, epidemiological safety measures etc., it has become more than obvious that it is necessary to invest in connection and building relationships with parents.

Even after calming down the pandemic picture and returning to the "old work regime", it is good to be aware that the global health crisis has irreversibly changed, that is, expanded the ways in which we can build relations. **Therefore, it is important to consider how you can use the achievements of modern technology in favor of involving parents in the work of the kindergarten.**

Reflective exercise
In pairs, answer the following questions.
What did you do differently that worked to engage families during the pandemic?
Which of these practices will you continue to use moving forward?
How do you plan to use these "new" practices to support family engagement?

Here are some suggestions:

- Begin by assessing your available resources. Identify which professionals are familiar with social networks or video platforms. Determine if additional training is necessary and in which specific areas.
- Many tutorials for using platforms like Zoom, Canvas, or social networks are freely available on YouTube.
- Utilize multiple communication channels, such as the kindergarten's YouTube channel, the kindergarten's Instagram page, Facebook groups, Viber, and more.
- Engage parents in a conversation about their preferred apps. Research indicates that younger parents tend to use Instagram or TikTok more frequently than Facebook.
- Use social media interactively, not just for posting information or photos. For instance, consider using Instagram Stories for short questionnaires with parents or providing them with the opportunity to ask questions or suggest topics related to child development, which can be addressed in later webinars.
- Record responses to frequently asked questions in the form of short videos and upload them to the kindergarten's YouTube channel.
- Encourage professional associates and educators to conduct periodic "live meetings" on Zoom, during which important topics related to education, discipline, child development, and kindergarten collaboration can be discussed in a concise format (up to 30 minutes). Additionally, invite parents to participate in kindergarten activities or propose joint initiatives.
- These live meetings can also include discussions with parents who are experts in various fields.

- Provide parents with a calendar of significant dates related to kindergarten activities. Highlight important dates, including state and religious holidays, as well as historical milestones for national minorities. Utilize Google Calendar and offer parents the option to sync their calendars.
- Avoid assuming that parents are proficient in using social networks or applications. Always provide a brief guide or a link to a short YouTube tutorial.
- Strive to actively engage parents during online parent meetings or webinars. Keep in mind that attention and concentration can wane during online sessions, especially since parents are often at home in an informal setting, likely with their children, which can be distracting.
- After online meetings, consider sending parents essential information in written form.
- Be creative and open on social media while maintaining professional boundaries.

In addition to these recommendations, remember that building strong relationships and effective communication with parents is essential for successful collaboration between professionals, educators, and families.

3. Workshops

In front of you are offered workshops for parents which may be important to you in establishing a relationship of cooperation and involvement of parents in the work of the kindergarten. The workshops are covering the following topics: **Parents' rights and responsibilities for cooperation and partnership with pre-school institutions; Diversity of forms for parents'/family involvement; Equal responsibilities of mothers and fathers for involvement; Encouraging fathers' involvement; Additional support to parents of children in risk and children vulnerable to exclusion.**

We believe that the offered workshops and accompanying materials will make it easier for you to connect and build relationships with parents on topics that have often proved to be challenging in practice.

In Chapters from 2.6. up to Chapter 3. we provided you with the relevant information needed to organize and lead group meetings for parents. Also, in the fourth chapter, you will find important information about the rules of communication and regularities in the relationship between parents and professionals based on the theory of relational competencies.

Annex 3 and Annex 4 offer evaluations for parents but also for the workshop moderator. It is important that you complete them after each meeting and these evaluations can help you improve your work and consequently the involvement of parents in the work and decision-making in the kindergarten.

3.1. Moderator instructions

Takeaway message: When you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

- **PROCES**

The facilitation process should also focus on HOW the group participates in the learning process and not only on WHAT is achieved. For real change to happen, participants should be involved in constructive debate and should be exposed to a wide range of perspectives.

- **DON'T DEMAND EVERYONE MUST DO EVERYTHING**

Agree on the rule that no one has to do anything; everyone is free to choose and be responsible for themselves. Also, agree on the rule that it is ok to ask what is what prevents a person from participating in a certain activity.

In a non-judgmental way, encourage participants to share their opinions and ideas.

- **IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS POTENTIAL RESISTANCE**

Group heterogeneity can sometimes lead to the more difficult opening of participants during planned activities. Check how it is for parents during activities with professionals, but also how it is for professionals in a workshop with parents. Workshops of this type require from EVERY one of us, no matter what our role in life, a dose of vulnerability and openness to other, often unknown people. It's not always pleasant. In order to be able to contribute to the goals of the workshop, participants must feel safe, respected, and recognized.

Therefore, the task of the moderator is to check and address potential psychological resistances, e.g., "I am looking forward to having the opportunity to learn from the wisdom of the educator's experience, but also from the fresh perspective that parents bring."

Your role is to be a guide who appreciates parents' and caregivers' experiences as parents and helps them share their knowledge and expertise.

- **DO NOT EXPLAIN OR INTERPRET OTHER PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES AND EXPERIENCES**

When we explain, we always do it from our own position. We are not experts in other people's experiences. Everyone must develop their reflexivity.

- **REFLECT**

Sometimes parenting topics trigger some of the participants' unpleasant emotions. This is perfectly fine. It is important that the moderator, as well as other participants, do not comfort that participant. It is important that everyone comes into contact with their feelings and thoughts. By helping, we often only defend ourselves from our own helplessness and similar feelings. Instead, reflect, "I see it's not easy for you to talk about this topic." "I hear you're angry."

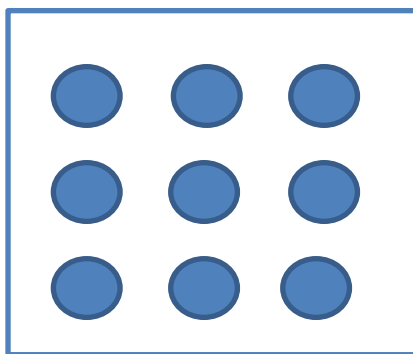
3.2. Introductory activities

3.2.1. Out of the box

An introductory activity that emphasizes the importance of creativity and thinking "out of the box" in the process of establishing cooperation and involving parents in the work and decision-making in kindergarten.

Time: 10 min

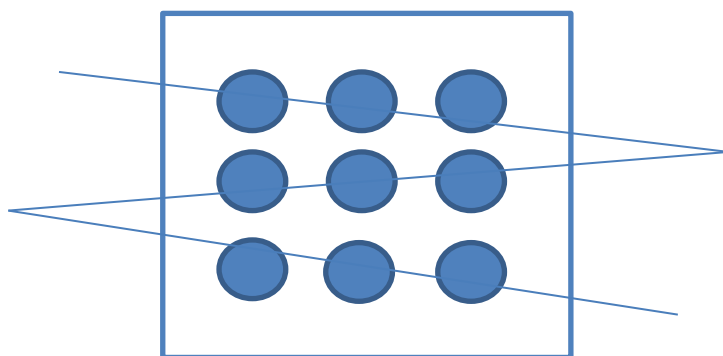
Required material: Poster with the join the dots brainteaser, paper, marker pens



Give each parent blank pieces of paper.

Draw the nine dots on the large piece of paper and ask the parents to copy the pattern. Tell them that they have to join all the dots using only three straight lines.

After 5 minutes or so, give them the answer.



Ask what we can learn from this brainteaser. (To develop cooperation, you may have to go outside the most obvious answers)

- Talk about the involvement of parents and what would "thinking out of the box" be in that case.
- Talk about what "out of the box" means for parents during workshop work.

3.2.2. Me in the eyes of a child

Be aware of the child's perspective; get into the child's shoes.

Time: 15 min

Required material: none

Ask parents to get comfortable and close their eyes.² Encourage them to visualize their child, bring them into their thoughts. What does their child look like? What are their child's characteristics, and does their child communicate something to them?

Next, ask them to recall a specific event when they felt challenged in their relationship with their child. What was happening during that time? What was their child doing? How did they feel in that moment? Instruct them to sit with that feeling for a while.

Now, tell them that you have a magical wand and will transform them into their children. Say: "Now, before me, I don't see a group of parents, but a group of children. I'll ask them: What is your mother (or father if the participant is a father)?"

Individually inquire each 'child' about what their parent is like. Remind parents to let their imaginations run freely.

If you are working with a group of parents of nursery-age children or children with disabilities, you can add: "If you could speak, what would you tell me about your mother?"

Additionally, a related sentence: "This exercise helps parents gain a deeper understanding of their children's perspectives and fosters stronger connections within the family."

3.2.3. Getting to know each other

This is a very easy exercise useful for developing group cohesion.

Time: 15 min

Required material: None

Ask the group, "Find something in your purse or wallet that reflects a part of you that we may not have known about, and tell us something about it. These are most often photos, keyrings, membership cards, coupons, etc."

² Don't insist; if one of the participants doesn't want to close his eyes, that's okay.

3.2.4. Human treasure hunt

This activity is a useful ice breaker. To find common characteristics and begin participant the establishment of a support system.

Time: 20 min

Required material: Treasure hunt handout

Explain, “We are going on a treasure hunt. I’m going to give you a list of ‘treasures’ or characteristics you might have in common with someone else.”

Tell parents to choose one “treasure” that applies to them and seek out a partner with the same one. (Stand up and walk around the room talking to people until you find someone who has the same treasure.). Share more about your "treasure" with a partner.³

Tell parents to choose another "treasure" and again seek out a partner.

Treasure hunt handout:⁴

Find a partner who shares one of these “treasures” with you:

- has adopted a child
- is a single parent
- has four or more children
- is a grandparent
- has a baby
- has a two-year-old girl
- has a two-year-old boy
- is expecting a child
- does not work
- has a child over the age of five
- once lived in another country
- has a child who loves vegetables
- has a child who hates vegetables

³ Suggest parents that they may exchange phone numbers, share information, provide support to one another in other ways that they choose.

⁴ Add anything you would like that is unique or interesting in the concrete context of your kindergarten.

3.3. Parents' rights and responsibilities for cooperation and partnership with pre-school institutions;

3.3.1. What is parental involvement?

Time: 20 min
Resources: none
Objectives: to introduce the parents to the concept of parental involvement.
<p>Moderator defines parental involvement within the context of family-preschool relationships and elucidate the diverse ways in which parents engage in preschool activities.</p> <p>Use informal questions to stimulate parents' recollection of instances when they were expected to participate or get involved in preschool-related tasks. Inquire exclusively about specific examples of situations and events that transpired within your institution.</p> <p>For instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- How many of you have attended a parent-teacher meeting at your child's preschool?- Have any of you been invited to participate in organizing an event for grandparents? What roles did you take on, and what were your impressions?- Last year, a considerable number of parents were engaged in the effort to improve the schoolyard. Were any of you actively involved in this initiative?- It's possible that some of you had consultations with our psychologist to discuss parenting dilemmas or attended a parenting workshop. Can you share your experiences with us? <p>Encourage participants to narrate and share their own experiences.</p> <p>Offer feedback on what participants share, focusing on understanding and acknowledging their experiences without passing judgment on the correctness or incorrectness of their responses.</p>

3.3.1.1. Handout Parental involvement

Parental involvement is systemic planned practice in kindergarten, which means that responsibility of kindergarten is both to identify, built opportunities and initiate

contextually relevant processes to establish programs that involve parents in the education of their children and broader priorities and activities in kindergarten.

It is not always easy to simplify what exactly parental involvement is. It cannot be done beyond considering the existing educational policies, institutional network and internal dynamics but also the families (un) availability, structure, cultural background.

However, what we can do is take into account that the involvement of parents in the work of the kindergarten must cover different **levels of involvement:**

Informing – (eg. reporting on current events, procedures, daily reports and contact with parents)

Consulting – (eg. conversations with parents in all, not just in problem situations.)

Joint decision-making- (eg. parents meeting, discussion groups, parent’s council...)

Joint action- (eg. stay of parents in a group, volunteer actions in kindergarten, joint actions in the local community.)

Or we can think in terms of different activities:

- **Daily contact.** Parents and professionals must exchange information every day from the first day of the child's stay in kindergarten. Notice boards, home-preschool notebook/diary, viber groups can help internal organization of information transfer between the educator and parents.
- **“One on one” meetings with parents.** Meetings shouldn’t be done only in case of conflict or at the beginning or end of the school year. Use them to connect to parents, to be curious about the child life or to share information about the child and to get to know each specific family. Make it easier for parents to organize for the meetings. Be open to online (zoom, skype ...) options for individual meetings. If the parent gives consent, the meetings can be recorded and sent to them and the recording also remains in preschool archive.
- **Group Meetings.** One-way model, where the professional is the only one who talks should be avoided. Group meetings can be used for getting to know parents, conveying information, mapping your parents' needs, planning, connecting parents with similar issues, challenges and so on.
- **Involvement in preschool group activities.** Parents and families can participate in the preschool during the adaptation process, in workshops, school outings, talks, having breakfast together, book clubs, volunteering, going to the park, “old parent helping new parent” activity...

- **Involvement in work of preschool and its organization.** Cooperation at a more formal level through participation in kindergarten teams and bodies of the institution (parents' council, board of directors)
- **Involvement in joint actions in local community** - supporting or volunteering in an action organized by an institution or organization in the local community
- **Home visits** – For example a visit of the whole group to the neighborhood where one of the children lives (ex. new child in a group) and a parent can be a “tour guide” through the neighborhood, or visits can be an advisory and informative visit to the parents in accordance with their needs.

3.3.2. Why is parental involvement important?

Time: 20 min

Resources: flip chart, markers

Objectives: explore benefits of parental involvement and collaboration

Ask participants to spend a few minutes thinking about the benefits of parent-preschool collaboration and to try to provide as much answers they can on following questions.

- 1) What are the benefits of parent – preschool collaboration for children?
- 2) What are the benefits of parent – preschool collaboration for parents and families?
- 3) What are the benefits of parent – preschool collaboration for professionals?

You can divide participants into small groups to discuss answers.

The moderator records the answers on the flip chart.

3.3.3. Improving the cooperation between the preschool and family.

Time: 40 min

Resources: flip chart, markers

Objectives: To explore how parents see the obstacles of involving parents in kindergarten work and decision-making. To discuss ways of further improving family and school relationships.

Ask participants to spend a few minutes thinking about the obstacles of parent-preschool collaboration.

What can be the challenges or obstacles to parental involvement?

Write answers on a flip chart. You may need to provide some examples to get the group started:

- *poor communication*
- *lack of information*
- *inappropriate time for parent meetings*

If you are working with group of participants whose children have been enrolled in kindergarten for some time you continue activity.

Divide participants into small groups and give them 10 minutes to discuss following questions.

- What should preschool do to encourage you as a parent to involve more?
- What are the examples of good involvement which already exist in kindergarten?
- What would you change about the current ways of parental involvement in a preschool?

Inform participants that one participant will speak each time while the others listen and note down on a flip chart responses.

3.3.4. Rights and responsibilities

This activity delves into the rights and responsibilities of parents in their collaboration and partnership with preschool institutions.

Time: 60 minutes

Required Materials: Large sheets of paper suitable for creating a life-sized child's drawing, Marker pens or crayons, Stickers (optional)

Begin by creating an outline of a human body on a large sheet of paper, making sure it remains gender-neutral. Alternatively, you can have a volunteer lie down on the floor and draw the outline of their body shape.

Explain that this body drawing will visually represent a parent's rights and responsibilities.

Parents should brainstorm all the rights they believe they should possess. The moderator will record these suggestions inside the 'body' using one color of pen.

Next, parents are tasked with listing their responsibilities. To assist them, illustrate that many rights come with corresponding responsibilities, such as the right to speak and the

responsibility to listen. Document the parents' responses on the margins (outside of the body).

Direct parents to a handout detailing their rights and obligations or to an official document from your preschool or relevant legal provisions. Initiate a group-level discussion about the similarities and differences between these documents and what the parents have stated.

A brief break can be taken at this point.

Review all the rights listed by the parents within the body.

Ask each parent to vote for the three rights that hold the most significance for them. Parents can mark three different rights with dots using a pen of a distinct color, or if available, provide each parent with three stickers.

In this way, the activity encourages a deeper understanding of parent's roles and fosters productive discussions on their rights and responsibilities within the context of preschool institutions.

Select the three rights with the most votes and discuss:

- Were they surprised by the answers? In what way?
- In their opinion, should any other right have been included in the three most important ones?
- How this right can be realized, for example: What needs to happen so parents can have the right to choose food for children on a daily basis?

3.3.5. Cooperation

To establish clear and written criteria regarding their rights and responsibilities.

It is suggested that this task be conducted following the "Rights and Responsibilities" activity. If this is not the case, distribute printed materials outlining parental rights and obligations.

Cooperation is a mutual endeavor; rights and obligations pertain to both parents and professionals.

Time: 40 minutes

Required materials: Paper, pencils, hammer

Divide the parents into groups of 3-4 participants.

Request each parent to record two rights and two responsibilities that hold the utmost significance for them. For instance, respect and effective communication.

Encourage them to share what they've noted within their respective groups and emphasize the two most crucial rights and two most essential obligations at the group level.

Urge participants to formulate these rights and obligations within the group in quantifiable terms.

You may say: Ask yourselves, how will you recognize when you are being respected? How should we conduct ourselves to ensure others feel respected? Have the group compile as many specific responses as possible.

Transcribe the answers on the board, potentially dividing it into two sections: "rights" and "obligations." The moderator can guide and summarize the responses and provide appropriate suggestions.

For example, under Obligation - Respect, a message to the educator should be sent only on working days.

Collaboratively, with the group, devise as precise rules of cooperation as possible.

- Discuss how the parents experienced this activity.
- What new insights have they gained?
- What potential barriers do they envision in implementing these cooperation rules?

3.4. Diversity of forms for parents'/family involvement;

3.4.1. What can be parental involvement?

Time: 40 min

Required material: paper, pen, Handout- Epstein typology of parental involvement

Divide participants into groups of 3-4 members. Each group received a copy - Handout Epstein typology of parental involvement.

It needs to have at least six groups. Each group was given the task to elaborate on one type of activity from the typology in more detail.

Ask parents to try to list as many specific ways of involvement as possible that would relate to a given type of activity.

Encourage parents that it is okay to share their ideas and suggestions.

At the large group level, share the answers. The moderator writes them on a flip chart, summarizes, and comments.

3.4.1.1. *Handouts Epstein typology of parental involvement*

The author Epstein (Epstein, 2001) developed a typology of parental involvement in children's education, highlighting the following six types of activities:

1. (Type 1) - parenting - activities of parents and other family members that provide a safe and stimulating environment for growth, development, and learning in the form of housing, health care, proper nutrition, safety, daily interactions of adults with children in stimulating activities of learning;
2. (Type 2) - communication with the educational institution - various activities of the parents within the two-way exchange of information with the teachers and other staff about the current events in the school and the general progress of the child;
3. (Type 3) - volunteering - involving parents in activities to support and assist in various projects aimed at modeling children's behavior or improving learning conditions through personal engagement in recreational and other activities in the pre-school;
4. (Type 4) - support at-home - activities in which the parents additionally support the child's learning and encourage his / her progress by talking about topics related to learning and play in the pre-school institution;
5. (Type 5) - decision making - involvement of parents in decision making on issues important for the quality of work in pre-school institutions directly and/or through various bodies;
6. (Type 6) - community collaboration - engaging parents in identifying community services and resources that can contribute to improving the learning environment for each child in need of development and learning support.

3.4.2. Supporting children

Time: 30 min

Resources: flip chart, markers

Objectives: to explore different types of parental involvement and collaboration

Tell participants that support of parents is very important to child development.
Ask participants to spend a few minutes thinking about the different things that parents and family members do at home to support and help their children grow and develop?

You can ask: What did your parents and other family members do to support you grow as a person?

Write answers on a flip chart. You may need to provide some examples to get the group started:

Helped me with my homework

Read to me

Provide for me

Make a cake for my birthday

Do a homework with me...

Tell participants that involvement in work of preschool is also a way to support development of children. You can shortly list some of the benefits for a child if a stable and good relationship.

Ask participants to spend a few minutes thinking about the different things that parents and family members do at kindergarten to support and help their children grow and develop?

Write down the answers on a flip chart.

3.4.3. Shaping the future of our kindergaten

Time: 45 min

Resources: flip chart, markers

Objectives: To encourage parents to actively participate in decision-making processes at the daycare and explore different ways they can contribute.

Begin with a warm welcome and introduction. Share the workshop's objectives and the importance of parental involvement in the daycare.

Break the parents into small groups and provide them with scenarios or case studies related to daycare decisions (e.g., curriculum, events, policies). Encourage them to discuss and brainstorm potential solutions or ideas.

Each group presents their ideas and discusses their insights. This allows parents to learn from one another.

If you are skilled and know parents you can engage parents in a role-playing activity where they simulate a decision-making meeting. This can help them practice effective communication and negotiation skills.

Gather feedback from the parents about the workshop and what they plan to implement in their involvement at the daycare. Create an action plan together.

3.4.4. Family Day: Decision-Making Together

Time: 60 min

Resources: flip chart, markers

Objectives: To involve both parents and children in the decision-making process and strengthen the parent-child bond while exploring diverse forms of involvement.

Start with fun activities that encourage bonding between parents and children, like art and craft projects or team games.

Share a story or a short video or read a story about a family making important decisions together. Discuss the importance of involving children in family choices.

Break families into groups, each with both parents and children. Provide a scenario relevant to the daycare (e.g., choosing a theme for an event or a field trip) and have them make decisions as a team.

Each group presents their decisions and explains their thought process. Encourage creative and open discussions.

Engage parents and children in a collaborative art project to symbolize unity and working together as a family.

End with a discussion about how this experience can be applied in their families and daycare involvement. Encourage parents and children to make a commitment to actively participate in the kindergarten's decision-making process.

3.5 Encouraging fathers' involvement

Notes to moderator

Please keep in mind that the term "father" encompasses fathers and other men who play a significant role in a child's life. This person can be a biological father, adoptive, foster, or stepfather. It can also be a grandfather or another adult family member or a close friend.

Irrespective of ethnicity or socioeconomic status, fathers are traditionally less involved in child-rearing than mothers.

Before organizing workshops, it would be wise to address these questions within your institution. They can assist you in planning father-focused workshops more effectively:

1. How can you actively generate interest among fathers regarding involvement in preschool?
2. Which events and activities in your kindergarten witness the most significant participation from fathers – as attendees, volunteers, or organizers?
3. Does your preschool employ specific outreach efforts to engage fathers more actively as volunteers, attendees, and organizers?
4. Are there existing programs, events, or activities specifically tailored for fathers in your preschool or within your community?
5. How can you ascertain whether you are meeting the needs, concerns, and interests of fathers in your preschool?
6. When are the best times to schedule workshops?
7. What challenges and concerns do you encounter when attempting to involve fathers more actively?
8. What potential benefits could arise for the children, families, preschool teachers, and the preschool itself through increased father involvement?

Furthermore, some projects designed to enhance fathers' participation in their children's education have offered valuable recommendations to consider:

- Fathers tend to prefer active projects over passive meeting participation. They are more inclined to engage in projects where they can utilize their unique skills, such as constructing playground equipment, overseeing sports events, painting, or moving furniture.
- Be mindful of gender roles, expectations, and stereotypes. Recognize that some fathers may prefer working and connecting with other men and may be hesitant to discuss certain personal topics with women.
- Consider activities that encourage fathers to actively engage with their children. Programs and workshops aimed at developing life skills are likely to attract men, opening the door to increased male involvement in their children's education.
- Take into account fathers' working hours and plan events accordingly.

3.5.1. Role of a father

Time: 30 min

Resources: flip chart, markers, papers

Objectives: Fathers identify the role of father in childrens lives.

Ask participants to write down their answers to these questions:

- What is the task of a father in a child's life?
- What did they learn from their father?
- What would they like to teach their children?

Discuss answers in a big group.

3.5.2. Then and now

Time: 30 min

Resources: flip chart, markers, papers

Objectives: Fathers identify changing of expectation role of a father

Ask participants to write down their answers to these questions:

- In what way is being father now different than when you were a child?
- write two similarities and two differences in how your father treated you and how you treated your child.

Discuss answers in a big group.

3.5.3. Shared responsibilities

Time: 30 min

Resources: flip chart, markers, papers

Objectives: differences in nurturing children between fathers and mothers

Shortly explain what is meant by the term – to nurture.

Ask participants to spend a few minutes thinking about characteristics of nurturing children and they are common to both males/fathers and females/mothers.

Write answers on a flip chart. You may need to provide some examples to get the group started:

Expressing love

Encouraging

Hugging

Limit setting

Listening

Ask participants if they can identify characteristics of nurturing more common to male and more common to female.

3.5.4. Values

Time: 45 minutes

Resources: flip chart, markers, printed handouts for all participants

Objectives: Fathers will identify the values, behaviors, and characteristics they wish to instill in their children.

1. Begin by stating: Fathers play a crucial role in their children's lives. You have a significant impact on how your child will grow and develop. It's vital that you understand the behaviors and qualities you value in a child and carefully consider how to convey these values."

Ask or remind participants, what is a value? (Something you believe in, is important to you, and often guides your behavior.)

Provide an example of a value. (Honesty.)

2. Instruct the fathers to review the statement on the handout and select 5 sentences that best represent the most important values to them.

3. Initiate a discussion by posing some of the following questions:

- What was the experience like for you? Was it challenging or easy to choose only 5 sentences/values?

- Why did you choose specific behaviors or characteristics?

- Would you have chosen different values if your child were the opposite sex (i.e., if your son were a daughter or your daughter were a son)? Why or why not?

- What were the three most commonly selected behaviors or characteristics (values)? Why do you believe these were chosen frequently?

- What does a child need to develop the behaviors and characteristics you've chosen? For example, what supports a child in becoming a good student at school? (Valuing intelligence and good grades, having effective study habits, enjoying reading, being curious, and asking questions.)

Say to participants that children learn about values and by watching us, adults.

Remember that fostering open communication with your child is essential in shaping their values and characteristics.

You can play a short video about fathers to participants

Suggestion: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htgPh3DalmM> or any educational video that for you consider it appropriate. Make sure that you provide translation to video, so all participants can understand.

- How do you try to encourage these traits in your children?
- What do your children learn when you get involved in work of kindergarten? (give example: volunteering in kindergarten, coming to a parent-teacher meeting...)

4.5.4.1. Handout - "What I Value in my Child"

- A child who is obedient.
- A child who is curious.
- A child who always listens to me.
- A child who is resourceful.
- A child who never talks back.
- A child who is open and share with me his/her thoughts and feelings.
- A child who has many friends.
- A child who is honest.
- A child who values family.
- A child who can control his/her temper.
- A child who can stand up for him/herself.
- A child who is a leader.
- A child who looks good.
- A child who will be good student.
- A child who is physically fit and healthy.
- A child who will follow my religious beliefs.
- A child who is respectful.
- A child who feels good about him/herself.
- A child who is good at sports.
- A child who is happy.
- A child who is ambitious.

3.5.5. Father Vision

Time: 20 min

Resources: none

Objectives: Explore long term effect of active role in child life

Say to participants: Imagine 20 years from now your children are asked to be in a documentary film about their father. Imagine the filmmaker asks them to describe what kind of father you were, what it was like growing up with you. With this scenario in mind, please respond to the questions below.

1. Take a few minutes to respond to all of the questions in writing alone.

a) Twenty years from now, what are some things you hope your child says about you as a father?

b) What are some things you hope they don't say about you as a father?

c) Is there anything you could do more of, less of or change altogether to be a better father?

d) How can involvement in work of preschool can help you become better father?

Recommendation: you can watch this short video with group:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSnKNXuW5TE>

3.5.6. Involvement

Time: 20 min

Resources: none

Objectives: Explore specific ways of getting involved in the work of the kindergarten

Aks participants to think about following questions.

- Things you enjoy doing with your child/children:
- Things you would enjoy doing with other dads/kids? Other families?
- Topics/activities for fathers that you would like to join in preschool?

Discuss answers in a big group.

3.6 Additional support to parents of children in risk and children vulnerable to exclusion.

3.6.1. What is support for you?

Time: 20 min

Resources: none

Objectives: Explore specific obstacles and need for support in kindergarten

Ask participants to think about following questions:

- What are the obstacles for your active involvement in kindergarten?
- What would be useful for the kindergarten to do in order to encourage your cooperation?

Write down the answer to a flip chart.

Discuss answers in a big group.

3.6.2. Learning from the Past

Time: 30 min

Resources: none

Objectives: Explore the quality of the relationship we want to achieve in cooperation between parents and professionals working in preschool.

Ask parents to recall experiences of collaboration with professionals from the education, health or social care systems. It could be a relationship that lasted or it could be a one-time relationship.

Ask participants to make a list of all the things professionals said and did that they felt hurt more than helped them. Ask them to be specific, for example, criticized.
(Allow one or two minutes.)

Ask participants to make a list of all the things professionals said and did that helped them. Ask them to be specific, about things professionals said and did that they felt helped and empowered them (even if those things may not have felt helpful at the time). (Allow one or two minutes.)

Invite participants to get into diads or triads and discuss their lists for two or three minutes.

On a flip chart, make two columns with the following headings: “Ineffective Collaboration” and “Effective collaboration” Ask the group to discuss in a big group.

3.6.3. Parental Engagement for Inclusion

Time: 120 min

Resources: flipchart, markers, pens and paper

Objectives: To create awareness about the importance of active parental involvement in the daycare's decision-making processes and activities. It focuses on how parents can contribute to the well-being of their children and the broader community.

- Welcome parents and engage in a group ice-breaker to foster a comfortable atmosphere.

2. Understanding the Barriers

- Ask parents to identify and discuss challenges they face in being actively involved in their child's daycare life.

- Facilitate a sharing of experiences and solutions to common barriers.
- Create a list of common challenges on a flipchart or whiteboard.

3. Overcoming Stigmas

- Open Discussion about challenge stigmas related to parental involvement. Create a list of common challenges on a flipchart or whiteboard.

Share research or stories that dispel common misconceptions about parental engagement.

4. Building Community

- Divide parents into small groups.
- Each group discusses and shares their experiences, ideas, and concerns about creating a sense of community among parents.
- Encourage parents to brainstorm activities that can bring them together beyond the workshop. Share in a big group

5. Goal Setting

- Bring back parents to small groups. Hand out papers and pens to parents.
 - Ask them to write down one or more specific goals related to their active participation in the daycare. Discuss these goals in small groups and select a few to share with the whole group.
 - Encourage commitment to achieving these goals and provide contact information for follow-up.
-
- Summarize key points discussed in the workshop, write them on a flipchart.
 - Thank parents for their participation and emphasize the importance of their active involvement in the daycare.
 - Share contact information and details for the next workshop or follow-up activities.

4. Deeper understanding of relational competences

The basic theoretical starting point of the project concerning the cooperation and involvement of parents in the work and decision-making in kindergarten is the concept of relational competencies, which we define as:

“Professional's willingness and ability to" see "the individual child on its own terms and attune her behavior accordingly without giving up leadership, as well as the ability to be authentic in her contact with the child. And as the professional's ability and will take the full responsibility for the quality of the relation. "(Jul & Jensen, 2014)^{viii}

We have chosen to supplement this theoretical concept with principles of positive parenting which we believe complements and offers a quality basis for working with parents. The family plays a key role in the child's upbringing, so preschool should support positive parenting by respecting and promoting the strengths and skills needed by the parent to fulfill their role.

The story of relational competencies goes beyond the theoretical framework and lives in modern schools and kindergartens. Take a look at some of the significant projects that are being done in schools and kindergartens across Europe, and are based on the theory of relational competencies.

Hand in hand project - Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity Related Career Challenge

<https://handinhand.si/en/home2/>

Emaptie macht Schule project – helps professionals deepen their relationship skills and empathy skills to create a mindful, developmental learning environment for all.

<https://www.empathie-macht-schule.de/projekt-2/>

"From obedience to responsibility" - a project that is being implemented for the 4th year and which deals with connecting professionals from Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia with the aim of developing relational competencies

<https://familylabassociation.com/projects/>

Communication between home and preschool has to be regular, two way and meaningful. So, some of the settings of quality communication are offered in the manual.

Expert	Reflecting practitioner
Others assume that I possess knowledge, and I have to confirm that regardless of whether I am sure of my knowledge.	Others assume that I possess knowledge but I am not the only one in this situation and it is not only my knowledge that is crucial and important. My insecurity will be an incentive for me and my parent to learn.
Keep your parents at a distance and stick to the role of an expert. Give the parent an impression of expertise but give the impression of warmth and sympathy "which softens".	Looking for a way to parental thoughts and feelings. Allow his respect for my knowledge to grow as he discovers it more and more.
Check the respect and status in the client's reaction to me as an expert.	Check the feeling of freedom and the real connection with the client, since I no longer have to keep the role of an expert.

4.1. Relational competencies

Takeaway message: How and why you do something is often more important than what you do.

Recommended: Relational competences in public schools
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vg1fKkwKJyo>

To work with relational competencies could be:

- To gain knowledge about emotional reactions
- Gain knowledge about our inherited sociability
- Gain knowledge about socio-emotional development

It is a known fact that points to the fact that learning is emotionally preoccupied. Learning and cognitive processing are deeply related to emotional responses. When we want to understand how something is learned, we should always pay sincere attention to the concrete situation and acknowledge that our ways of relating and communicating affect the students.^{ix}

The concept of relative competence is a concept that is only used concerning professionals because of an asymmetrical relationship that professionals build with children and their parents. They are asymmetrical because a professional has more power as part of the established system as well as more experienced and knowledge due to his education and position.

Very often, we see children and sometimes parents as the guilty ones when something goes wrong in the relationship. Instead of claiming one of the parties (might also be the professional) as guilty, it is much more useful to see a professional as responsible for the qualities of the relationships.

When we talk about parental involvement, we are often focused on the content-specific activities involving parents and professionals, but what is just as important is what the atmosphere is like before, during, and after specific activities.

We call this the process dimension of the relationship - that means the way the professional creates the environment for parental involvement. So, every relationship/situation has at least two dimensions, both a what are we doing together and a how are we doing it? And what is most important when teaching professional relational competence is how.

Professionals have, above all, procedural responsibility, i.e., responsibility for the tone, atmosphere, and mood at work. Professionals are not the only ones responsible for the outcome of the cooperation! We must not forget the role of parents!

But by taking responsibility for the process, professionals create an atmosphere in which parents are more open to cooperation and thus creating outcomes.

Sometimes circumstances can be very challenging, and it can be very hard for professionals to see this responsibility. Often professionals have a personal experience that all the "power" is in the hands of parents. Parents, on the other hand, often feel vulnerable and exposed to the power of the institution and professional judgment, especially when they come from families at risk. If a professional recognizes his influence and responsibility, it also gives him the power to do something to change what he finds should be changed.

How can the professional create a good environment for parental involvement? This is possible if the professional knows how to create this space and also has the will to take the full responsibility of doing it.

We will explain some of the basic principles of this approach, which can contribute to a better understanding of family dynamics and the behavior of parents and professionals.

4.2. Integrity and cooperation

Integrity encompasses an individual's feelings, values, and thoughts, both mentally and physically. A child is born into this world with their inherent integrity, which broadly signifies their needs and boundaries. As they grow, their integrity becomes more complex through interactions with others. Nurturing a child's personal integrity and human development is not only a parental responsibility but also an integral part of professional practice.**

A child discovers their identity and their relationship with self through feedback from parents and later, educators. For instance, if a baby rejects the food offered by their mother, and the mother responds with, "You're full, you don't want any more," the child learns to recognize their fullness. Conversely, if the mother insists, saying, "You didn't eat anything, have another bite, or I'll be sad," the child may begin to prioritize others' judgments over their own feelings of hunger or fullness.

From the very first day of life, children can express their limits and needs, but they cannot defend them. They rely heavily on the sensitivity of adults to recognize and respond to these needs. Parents play a vital role in understanding who their child truly is, distinguishing them from not only the average child but also from their own desires, hopes, and expectations.

Traditionally, the focus has mainly been on teaching children social values, norms, and rules, essentially guiding them on how to become a part of a family, group, or society. However, fostering strong individuals who understand their own needs, desires, and emotions is equally crucial. It's not about egoism but about clear communication and building relationships based on respect and equal dignity

Cooperation is often seen as finding one's place in a group. But, in any interpersonal relationship, conflicts arise between the desire to cooperate and the need to preserve one's integrity. This conflict mostly unfolds within each individual.

For instance, educators aim to establish cooperation with parents to support the child in a group setting. Parents may exhibit verbal aggression, disinterest, or uncooperativeness, while educators need cooperation and respectful communication. This illustrates the delicate balance between these two needs.

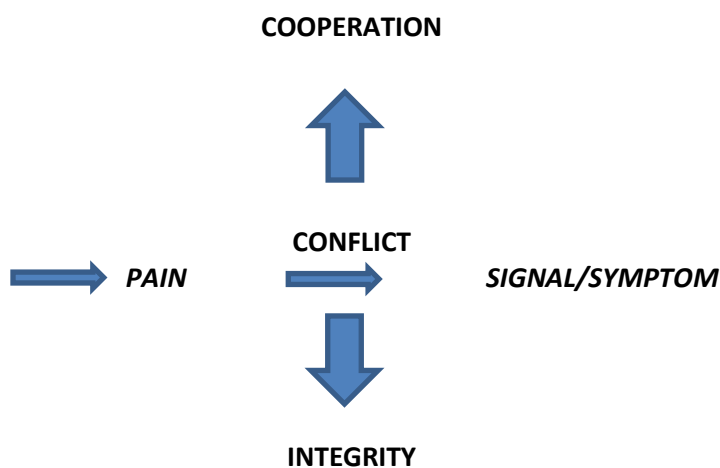


Figure 1: The relationship of conflict between integrity and cooperation

Think about your typical reactions in such situations. How do you handle internal conflicts? You can likely recall instances where you prioritized cooperation over your own needs and

times when you chose self-preservation, even if it led to conflict. It's essential to reflect on your tendencies and how you resolve internal conflicts.

There are two criteria for evaluating how you resolve internal conflicts: whether you prioritize cooperation or integrity and whether you do so by choice or out of necessity. The key is to choose your actions consciously, even when facing conflicts.

If you swing too far towards either cooperation or integrity and don't allow yourself the freedom to choose, you may become overly compliant or resistant. Finding that balance is crucial to prevent burnout.

Resolving internal conflicts through freedom of choice doesn't eliminate interpersonal conflicts, but it creates opportunities for these external conflicts to be resolved with mutual respect and value. The art of fostering healthy relationships involves cooperation without compromising anyone's integrity, yours or others'.

Questions for Reflection:

- In your professional relationships, do you find yourself cooperating or prioritizing integrity more often?
- Can you recall three instances from your professional experience where you had to strike a balance between cooperation and integrity?
- How do you feel when you're in situations where you must cooperate or maintain integrity? What about when you have the choice?
- Reflect on your interactions with your parents. Do they tend to cooperate or prioritize integrity in your relationship with them, and how do you explain that?
- Can you remember an example of working with parents when they chose to cooperate with institutional demands at the expense of their own integrity?

4.3. Responsibility

To begin with, it is important to define the term responsibility. Responsible is someone who has a personal ability to respond, to move, to respond (in English, response-ability has the same etymological meaning). The one who behaves in accordance with himself and his environment is responsible; he is responsible when he takes action (response) to his personal needs, desires, and interests, as well as the needs, possibilities of the environment in which he is.⁵

There are two types of responsibilities:

1. Personal responsibility

The existential responsibility that all people have from the first day of life and concerns the responsibility for their own integrity - their own thoughts, emotions, behaviors, body, ideas, desires, beliefs, dreams, etc.

2. Social responsibility

Responsibility for family, kindergarten group, work, social rules, respect for the law, etc.

The difference between these two responsibilities is that social responsibility can be transferred to another person. For example, if I get sick, my colleague can take over my job. No one but us can take personal responsibility (although not everyone takes it).

Taking personal responsibility is an indicator of mental health through actively practicing responsibility for what we say, what we drink, eat, for the boundaries, we set for other people, if we can say no - or care about personal boundaries, the way we treat our body, thoughts, are we going beyond our borders, etc.

Taking personal responsibility is a prerequisite for social responsibility. Children who receive support in taking responsibility for themselves will automatically take social responsibility (Jul, J., 1995). We achieve this by showing interest, accepting, naming, taking into account the integrity of the child in everyday life. Situations and teach the child to take care of his own integrity.

Personal responsibility (and consequently social responsibility) is developed by professionals (and adults in general) through the reflection of professional experiences that aim to develop self-awareness and self-regulation. Self-awareness is understood as the ability to recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior include accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations.^x

And self-management is understood as the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself.

When we talk about relationships:

- Between children and adults means the responsibility of adults for the quality of the relationship, e.g., the child cannot be responsible for his or her relationship with the parents because he or she is completely dependent on them, so he or she will adjust to them and their guidance and upbringing and will not question them. Thus, the quality of the child-parent relationship is always and exclusively the responsibility of the parent, as long as the child is a child by age. In kindergartens, educators are responsible for the quality of relationships with children. Their ability to take responsibility for each individual child and group of children is valuable because it strengthens their personal authority and prevents violations of the personal integrity of both parties.

- In the interaction between adults in which one has more power than the other (asymmetric relationship), the one who has more power is responsible.
- In the interaction between equal adults (symmetrical relationship), both are equally responsible for the quality of the process and its consequences for the individual and the community, both positive and negative.

Responsibility is often confused with the emotion of guilt. There is no sign of equality between responsibility and guilt.

To be responsible means that we are responsible for the ability to observe ourselves and others (child, children) in interaction and to respond to known and unknown situations in a new and different way.

Responsibility relates to:

- Self-awareness
- Interest in another
- Proactivity, not reactivity in relationships.
- Initiating a relationship repair if an interruption has occurred.

At the same time, the responsible professional monitors himself (his thoughts, emotions, states), takes responsibility for them (e.g., calms down if he is upset), follows the other side (is interested in the other's perspective), and in accordance with his professional competencies, law and ethics. The profession acts, taking into account the needs of the other party (child, parent) to the extent possible.

4.4. Equal dignity

The foundation of the concept of EQUAL DIGNITY lies in the recognition that ALL INDIVIDUALS, irrespective of age, gender, experience, or behavior, possess equal intrinsic worth and are entitled to their dignity.

In the context of children, this signifies:

- Showing genuine interest in their needs, desires, thoughts, aspirations, emotions, and more.
- Taking their concerns seriously.
- Integrating them into the family or group based on one's personal and professional values, knowledge, and insight.

This doesn't imply unconditional agreement with every child's request but rather a profound respect for their feelings and opinions.

Consider the contrast in these two sentences:

- I notice you really like that balloon. It's wonderfully vibrant and colorful. I won't purchase it for you at this moment.

- You tend to invent things constantly. You already have a multitude of toys at home, and you're always seeking more.

In regard to adults, it signifies that the attitudes, emotions, experiences, and self-conceptions of all parties involved in the relationship hold equal significance in forming that connection, and nothing is dismissed based on notions of being childish, immature, unreal, feminine, or masculine, and so forth.

This principle advocates for relationships based on a subject-to-subject dynamic, not a subject-to-object dynamic. It demands that we recognize and respect the competence and human dignity of children and other adults and interact with them accordingly.

Furthermore, it underscores the importance of extending the same level of respect, esteem, and acknowledgment to OURSELVES, granting us the right to maintain and express our own integrity, thoughts, desires, and boundaries.

Many of us grew up in relationships where we were positioned as objects, making it easy for us to view relationships with children or parents condescendingly or diminish our own worth within those relationships.

EQUAL DIGNITY is a complex value that necessitates awareness and continuous practice. It represents an evolving process within relationships, not a static ideal. It must be constantly adapted to accommodate changing circumstances. In practical terms, this also means that certain guidelines and institutional norms must be developed through ongoing dialogue with children and parents.

4.4.1. Communication of recognition

Recognition communication is not merely an external communication technique but rather an inherent life attitude. This perspective, as suggested by Jul and Jensen in 2014, underscores the significance of this approach.

It constitutes a style of conversation rooted in professionals' capacity and willingness to exhibit openness, sensitivity, and empathy toward another person's perspective and self-image. Recognition involves delving deeper than surface behaviors, such as discerning parental resistance in body language despite verbally agreeing or understanding the underlying fear and helplessness behind aggressive behavior.

Distinguishing between these sentences exemplifies the essence of recognition:

- "Mom, there's no reason to cry. Your children should see you smiling."

- "It seems to me that it is not easy for you to hear about this topic."

Professionals are trained to create workshops, recognizing the importance of parents engaging in play and learning with their children, as it significantly impacts a child's intellectual development. However, recognizing the importance of being attuned to parents' perspectives, one might say, "It seems to me that you may have reservations about the

activity we've designed. Parents sometimes find it unusual to engage in play with us, and I'd appreciate hearing your concerns."

Recognition communication instills in others a sense of being truly "seen," while judgmental or evaluative communication often leaves individuals feeling exposed, judged, or labeled.

The act of "seeing" can either reaffirm existing self-knowledge or lead to new insights. When relationships lack this experience of being truly "seen," individuals may feel unheard, despite being listened to. Many individuals or families at risk attest to experiencing a lack of genuine recognition in their interactions with others, as highlighted by Jul and Jensen in 2014.

Professionals also bear the responsibility of modeling the importance of taking people seriously without necessarily adopting their attitudes, desires, or beliefs.

4.4.2. Personal language

Unlike professional language, which establishes the communication framework across various professions and aims for objectivity, personal language conveys one's individual thoughts, values, and emotions, striving to synchronize inner experiences with external expression. It represents the most authentic embodiment of personal integrity.

Furthermore, personal language plays a vital role in establishing connections, expressing appreciation, and resolving conflicts. It:

- Facilitates clear and meaningful communication, fostering a sense of closeness.
- Enhances one's self-esteem, reinforcing self-worth.
- Serves as a crucial tool for self-regulation, promoting personal responsibility.
- Inspires others to understand and respond to individual perspectives.
- Upholds the integrity of others, avoiding harm or violation.

It's essential to distinguish between personal language and impersonal communication. For instance:

- Marko's communication is ineffective and lacks engagement.
- When Marko interacts with me, he appears disinterested, making it challenging to capture his attention. It's significant for me to see him engage in diverse relationships.
- Please turn off your phones.
- I'd appreciate it if you could silence your cell phone; its constant interruptions are quite bothersome.

Personal language encompasses both verbal and nonverbal elements within a message. The verbal component often begins with the use of personal pronouns like "I," allowing individuals to articulate their unique experiences in specific interactions or relationships:

- I'm open to hearing your criticisms if you feel I treated you unfairly, but I'd prefer if you didn't raise your voice.
- Typically, we extend the duration of the workshop a bit, but today, I'm tired, and I'd like us to finish on time.

Nonverbal cues must align with the verbal part to lend authenticity and substance. There is no one-size-fits-all formula for personal language; it's highly individual.

Remember: Personal doesn't mean private! Being personal involves expressing your own mental and emotional responses, while being private entails discussing your personal life or other people. In a collaborative parent-child relationship, it's possible to succeed without becoming overly private. However, the key question remains whether cooperation can truly thrive without embracing personal language.

4.5. Positive parenting

Takeaway message: Mistakes are the perfect opportunity to learn

Alfred Adler anticipated the future direction of the helping professions by calling upon professionals to become social activists by addressing the prevention and remediation of social conditions that were contrary to social interest and resulted in human problems. He said that social interest is the indicator of mental health.

Adlerian psychologists are using the German word *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, from *Gemeinschaft* ("community, neighborhood") + *Gefühl* ("feeling") - "Community feeling" or "Social interest"; to describe the state of social connectedness and interest in the well-being of others that characterizes psychological health. Adlerian principles are insisting that in professional work is important to genuinely to have concern for one's fellow person and a sincere desire to make a contribution to society.

Adler's pioneering efforts on prevention services in general health lead him to increasingly advocate for the role of Individual psychology in schools and families. Because Individual psychology is based on a growth model, not a medical model, it is applicable to such varied spheres of life as child guidance, parent-child counseling, marital counseling, family therapy, group counseling, individual counseling with children, adolescents, and adults, cultural conflicts, correctional and rehabilitation counseling, and mental health institutions.^{xi} The world-famous approach to working with children and parents Positive discipline (Nelsen, J) is also based on Adlerian approaches.^{xii}

For the purposes of the manual, we have singled out seven Adlerian principles that provide a broader insight into human behavior that we believe is a good basis for building relationships with parents (Nelsen, J., 2000). The explanations are oriented towards understanding children's behavior, but their application to adults will be obvious.

1. Human personality is understood by its unity or pattern — the lifestyle.

A person is more than health, social relationships, status, or mental abilities. Labels and categories for children and parents contribute to a fragmentary analysis of behaviors. For example, parents can be considered "heavy," in resistance," or other common descriptors. Can we see beyond the label? How else can we describe that parent? Or a child?

2. Children are social beings.

Behavior is determined within a social context. Children make decisions about themselves and how to behave, based on how they see themselves in relationship to others and how they think others feel about them. Remember that children are constantly making decisions and forming beliefs about themselves, about the world, and about what they need to do to survive or thrive.

3. Behavior is goal-directed and purposeful.

Behavior is based on a goal to be achieved within a social context. The primary goal is to belong (to a group, family, or pre-school group) and feel significant to others. Children are not consciously aware of the goal they hope to achieve. Sometimes they have mistaken ideas of how to achieve what they want and behave in ways that achieve just the opposite of their goal. Rudolf Dreikurs explained this when he said, "Children are good perceivers, but poor interpreters."^{xiii}

For example, they may want to belong, but they act unacceptable in their attempts to achieve this goal. It can become a vicious cycle. The more their behavior invites annoyance or anger, the more unacceptable they may act because they want to belong. When we react to behavior, we are discouraging and perpetuate the behavior. When we thoughtfully act with kindness and firmness, we can be encouraging, and the behavior is likely to change.

The efforts of young children to belong in the family can be assisted if parents and professionals can find ways for these children to contribute significantly, in positive ways.

4. A misbehaving child is a discouraged child.

A misbehaving child is trying to tell us, "I don't feel I belong or have significance, and I have a mistaken belief about how to achieve it."

When a child behaves unacceptably, it is very difficult for adults to see behind the behavior and think about the unmet needs of the child. Understanding this concept is the first step for adults to be more effective in encouraging misbehaving children. It helps to be a code breaker and ask yourself, "What is a child really trying to tell me?" Remember, the child is not consciously aware of her coded message but will feel deeply understood when you deal with her hidden belief instead of reacting just to the behavior.

5. Equality

Equality does not mean to be the same. Adler meant by equality that all people have equal claims to dignity and respect. Although we are aware that adults have more knowledge,

experience, life wisdom, most adults are willing to agree that children are equal to them in value. A good example would be a 10 denari banknote and two 5 denari coins. They do not look the same but have the same value.

6. Mistakes are wonderful opportunities to learn.

This is one of the most encouraging concepts and yet one of the hardest to achieve in our society. We are all imperfect. What we need to achieve is the courage to change our debilitating beliefs about imperfection. There isn't a perfect human being in the world, yet everyone is demanding it of themselves and others — especially children.

7. Make sure the message "of love" gets through.

We are often taught that intention matters. However, in addition to our intention, it is important that others feel our good intention through our actions. "Can we turn the feeling of love into behavior that others will feel like love?"

In a professional role, we do not feel love for the parents we work with, but the assumption is that most professionals care about the well-being of children and their families.

Notice how the beliefs of parents and professionals are critical to understanding and changing behaviors. Many of these ideas have never been known to parents. Therefore, the relationship between a professional and a parent has a strong educational emphasis. It is the responsibility of the professional to understand the background of the behavior, i.e., to be interested in seeing that there are unmet needs in the background of unacceptable behavior.

4.6. Communication

Takeaway message: Default is always misunderstanding. (Podrazumevanje je uvek nerazumevanje)

What is communication?

The term communication comes from the Latin word communicate - to make general, common, and has several meanings:

- Announcement, presentation, lecture,
- Traffic, connection, the connection of one point with another^{xiv}.

The quality of a relationship often depends on the quality of communication (but not only that). That is why it is important to highlight in this part of the handbook one of the most important theories of communication - Watzlawick's law of communication, solution focused communication as well as several communication skills crucial for practical work with parents^{xv}.

4.5.1. Watzlawick's laws of communication

Paul Watzlawick's laws of communication provide valuable insights into the communication process and are essential for comprehending communication disorders in various professional contexts, including everyday conversations, counseling, group work, and more.

Watzlawick distilled the fundamental principles of the communication process into five laws:

1. It is impossible not to communicate.
2. Every communication comprises two aspects: content and process.
3. The nature of the communication relationship is influenced by the starting points of communication.
4. Communication can occur in either a symmetrical or complementary manner.
5. Communication occurs on both digital (verbal) and analog (nonverbal) levels.

Expanding on the first law, Watzlawick asserts that it's impossible for two people not to communicate, even in moments of silence. Non-verbal cues such as averting one's gaze, turning away, or offering brief responses carry significant messages. For example, a person who responds with simple "yes" or "no" answers signals a reluctance to engage in the conversation. Acknowledging this message can enhance the interaction. By saying, "I can see from your concise responses that this conversation might not be comfortable for you," it's possible to break the ice and foster a more productive dialogue. Conversely, failing to respond to a parent's statement also conveys a message, potentially leading the parent to believe there's an issue or that their input is unimportant.

This understanding of communication is particularly relevant when working with parents. Recognizing the impact of our behavior on the development of professional relationships is crucial. For instance, if a parent responds with persistent silence or brief "yes" or "no" answers, it signals their reluctance to engage in the conversation. Acknowledging this message can lead to a more productive exchange. Similarly, not responding to a parent's statement also conveys a message, potentially suggesting a problem or a lack of interest in their input.

2. Every communication consists of two aspects: content and process

The content aspect of communication refers to the properties of objects, people, descriptions of events. Process aspect on the relationship to the content and the message provider. Both aspects are present in every communication relationship.

The dimension of content affects the dimension of the process less than the reverse.

Thus, e.g., It is better for a parent to accept the same message from a professional associate than from an preschool teacher if the relationship between the preschool teacher and him is tense and if he has the experience that the preschool teacher does not accept him.

It is well known in psychotherapeutic practice that a process in a family or group can have three qualities.

- The process creates a symptom, the individual develops destructive or self-destructive behavior that is new in a given relationship, and that does not have to occur in other relationships.
- The process maintains a symptom, that is, destructive or self-destructive behavior that an individual has developed before entering into that relationship neither develops nor weakens.
- The process cures the symptom; destructive or self-destructive behavior diminishes or ceases in the current relationship and the new relationships it enters^{xvi}.

3. The nature of the communication relationship is conditioned by the points from which the communication begins

Each interlocutor has a starting point for the beginning of the communication flow, i.e., he perceives a certain aspect of the event as the beginning of communication. This is of particular importance for understanding causality.

For example. When the mother accuses the father of behaving provocatively because he is never at home and the father of the mother that it is because she is too lenient. And so they spin in a circle.

Knowledge of this law is very useful in observing and understanding relationships with parents.

A professional familiar with this law will not go in search of the causes and participate in establishing the “objective truth” about who is “guilty” of the current disruption in the relationship.

In such situations, it is important to help people see the circular connection of their behavior.

4. Communication can take place in a symmetrical or complementary way

Symmetrical communication implies relationships based on equality, and complementary communication, those based on differences (there are always two different positions - superiority and subordination). Complementary relationships are based on social relationships and roles (e.g., teacher-student relationships) or on the characteristics of individuals in a particular communication relationship (e.g., dominance and submissiveness).

5. Communication can flow on a digital (mostly verbal) and analog (mostly non-verbal) level

The distinction between digital and analog communication is significant because both aspects often take place simultaneously. In doing so, digital communication diff we change the content and the analog process.

It is important to keep in mind that the messages sent through these communication channels may be opposite, although both aspects of communication often take place simultaneously.

If we are angry or annoyed during a conversation with a parent and say, "Only you continue, what you say is very interesting," it will not be convincing. Given the great importance of nonverbal communication, we will pay special attention to this aspect below.

4.7. Solution-focused communication

Takeaway message: look for a solution, not for blame

It originated from the clinical practice of Steve de Shazer and Inso Kim Berg at the Center for Short Family Therapy in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the early 1980s. This therapy places emphasis on constructing solutions before addressing problems. The primary therapeutic task is to assist the client in envisioning how they would like things to be different and what needs to be done to achieve that. Minimal attention is given to diagnosis, exploring the past, or delving into the problem itself. Solution-oriented therapy is one of the most popular approaches, as it focuses on viewing individuals in a non-pathological light. They argue that problems arise when specific behaviors, which represent only a part of someone's personality, are mistaken for their entire identity. Advocates of this approach contend that we often tend to seek out culprits rather than solutions. The core of a high-quality cooperative relationship lies in the ability to direct the search for solutions.

It's important to note that Steve de Shazer and Inso Kim Berg both have primary education backgrounds in social work, and their therapeutic model for working with families reflects the values upon which this manual is based.

We believe that the selected elements of this model provide concrete communication support for professionals in building relationships and involving parents in kindergarten work:

Selected elements of this model that can be beneficial in your work include:

1. What should happen for you to say that it was worth coming to this workshop?

If we were to resolve this conflict, what would you first notice if it were different?

The conversation with the parents is focused primarily on the interests, motivation, competence, beliefs of the parents. Be interested in researching the perspective of the parents and accepting it. You don't have to agree with her, but it is important that you respect her.

2. What is different in the periods when _____ (you agree when you choose to come to parenthood, etc.)

Pay attention to exceptions, look for examples when there is no problem; that is, we collect information on successful forms of coping with challenges.

It is difficult for most people to immediately remember any exception, but if we are still a little persistent, most of them eventually describe the numerous variants that characterize what happens when there are no problems.

The key here is to take a stand that indicates that you as a professional would be surprised if there were no exceptions. If the parent still seems confused, in order to "roll the ball," we can suggest some possibilities that may be the reason for things to go smoothly.

Once again, note that we do not ask, "Was there a period when _____?" Because such wording will not reach our goal of demonstrating the belief that good things happen. The goal is always formulated in positive terms. "When you agree" instead of "When you don't argue." We want people to think about agreeing, not arguing, and not arguing continues to provoke images of quarrel (just like when, for example, you tell someone, "Don't imagine a picture of a purple flower," and he immediately imagines a picture of a purple flower).

3. Motivational questions

With these questions, we can assess how parents experience certain activities, whether they have different goals than ours.

- If on a scale of 10, it means that you are ready to do everything in your power to solve the problem, and 1, if you do not want a solution, where would you place yourself?
- What should happen if you come from number 2 to number 5?

Miracle Question: Suppose a miracle happened during the night, and the challenge (problem) you had (with the child, the educator...) disappeared. You don't know it happened. When you come to kindergarten the next day, what is the first thing you will notice?

4. Asking relational questions

Relational questions help the parent to see the situation from several angles; they enable a view from another perspective.

- How would your husband react if you joined the parent group?
- What does your wife say about that?
- Who was the first to notice your change?
- How do you think your child feels when you do that?

5. Normalization

Focus on looking at things in the life of a child, parent, or family as normal, everyday events, and not as for psychological or pathological issues. This "normalization" of behavior and experiences can be direct when we say something like, "Well, that's pretty understandable," and then we put a situation that they presented as psychological or pathological in the everyday framework.

The most common way we normalize is when we say things like, "Normal," "Sure," "Yes, that happens often." "It sounds familiar" - when people report things they think are unusual or pathological.

For example:

"Yes, almost everyone would feel like you in that situation."

"Of course, it can be confusing to fill out forms."

"Many children at that age behave like that."

Sometimes we normalize best indirectly, with what is not said, with what we are not upset about. Imagine the calming effect when the "professional" is not upset by your description of the problem. This reaction makes parents think that things may not be as bad as they thought.

6. Compliments

The professional should be sensitive to recognizing and naming each and every contribution to the collaboration.

- "Bearing in mind that you are a single mother who is very conscientious towards her children and that you do not have the support of the family, I am impressed that you are doing so well;"
- "I know it wasn't easy for you to get organized and come to the workshop because of work, but I appreciate your coming."

Sometimes, in order to normalize the presented problem in the form of a compliment, we take out of the context the things that the parent says. We emphasize certain aspects of the situation that the parents mentioned only in passing.

For example. If the mother says, "I know I should give in to my daughter and let her develop her wings, but that's really too hard for me," we can later compliment her: "I'm amazed that you see the importance of giving your daughter a chance to become more independent. Some mothers do not recognize this and are cramped in their relationship with their daughters. "

Compliments are not flattery! It is important that they are authentic and that you truly believe in what you are saying, and not use them as a "technique for winning over" parents.

NOTE!

Remember to observe your parents' reactions and then modify your actions if necessary. Not every parent likes every approach. A common mistake is to rigidly focus on positive things even though the parent persistently disqualifies them both verbally and nonverbally. If you insist on continuing in this mood, you endanger the relationship with the parent. At best, the parent could comment: "I don't think you understand my situation.", At worst, not to achieve a cooperative relationship.

Questions for reflection

- How does this theoretical concept fit into your work with parents?
- Do you already apply any of the above principles in your work? Which one?

- What elements could you use in your work?
- What would be difficult for you?

Annex: 1 Professional development self-assessment

Relationship based competencies to support involvement of parents

Knowledge, skills, and practices	I have a solid understanding and skills and continue to grow in this area.	I am making progress in my understanding, skills, and growth in this area.	I need support to learn more	I would like to focus on this area in my professional practice.
I understand preschool law policy about involvement of parents.				
I understand my preschool policy/approach about involvement of parents.				
I am confident that I have the cultural competencies to engage with families from diverse backgrounds.				
I am open to new possibilities for involving parents in work of preschool.				
I feel confident in my ability to build effective relationships with the families of the children I teach.				

I share child progress in a way that is meaningful and understandable to parents.				
I encourage feedback from parents.				
It is easy for me to give a feedback to a parent, even if it is a negative.				
Parents pay attention to my suggestions about how they can help or support their children.				
I am very supportive of parents and the role they play in their children's development and learning.				
It easy for me to set professional limits to parents.				
It is easy for me to to adjust my interventions to each parent or family				

Annex: 2 Professional development reflexive sheet (for individual conversations with parents)

Name:	
Date:	
Reason of meeting:	

<p>Reflections that precede the meeting (previous experiences working with parents, work plan, important topics, feelings of the professional)</p>	
<p>The process during the meeting (What you noticed during the meeting. Non-verbal communication, your feelings, the atmosphere of conversation)</p>	
<p>Post-meeting reflections (What was helpful for parents? What could I have done differently? How does parents affect me? How do I influence family? My feeling after meeting? Personal / family topic initiated by the family?)</p>	
<p>Influence of gender, culture, social status, values, etc.)</p>	

What have I learned from this meeting (What do I consider important / what should I pay attention to in my further professional development?/	

Anexx 3: Evaluation for parents

Print evaluations for each parent. You can also send evaluations online to parents using the Google form. At the beginning of the workshop, when you talk about the workshop agenda, note that you will give a short evaluation to the parents at the end of the meeting.

Distribute the evaluation to the parents at the end of a workshop. Ask them to stay a few more minutes and fill out a short questionnaire. Emphasize to parents that the evaluation is anonymous and that its purpose is to help you improve your work. Thank them for their cooperation.

Evaluation

Date:

1. Gender

a) Female

b) Male

2. Please rate your satisfaction with the quality of the workshop content? (1 to 5, where one means dissatisfied and five completely satisfied)

1..... 2 3 4 5

3. In your opinion, preschool teacher take into account the previous knowledge and experiences of the parenta. (1 to 5, where one means I disagree and five completely agree)

1..... 2 3 4 5

5. I most wanted to participate when ...
4. I least wanted to participate ...
5. What made the strongest impression on you (positive or negative) at the workshop?
6. Is there anything we haven't asked you that you want to share with us?

Anexx 4: Evaluation for professionals

It is very important that the workshop moderator completes the evaluation after meeting with the parents. Evaluation can help you develop reflection and improve your work. Evaluation can be important to you during supervision meetings and we will use it as material for further work and improvement of implementation competencies.

Evaluation

Name of a workshop:

Name of a professional:

Date:

1. The workshop was attended by _____ (number) parents.
2. What, in your opinion, are the good sides of the workshop you have implemented?
3. List the problems and difficulties in the implementation of the training (if any).
4. What would you do differently in the next realization of the workshop?
5. In your opinion, what was the most important thing for the parents that they received at the workshop?

Annex 5. Collegial reflection

Collegial reflection is seen as a model of structured reflection among peers.

- The purpose is to enhance professional competencies, build trust, self-confidence, and elevate professional self-esteem within a group of professionals.
- Supports the development of reflection and qualified professional dialogue in collegial work.
- Supports finding ways for professional and relevant action in relationships with children and parents.
- Collegial reflection is an excellent learning model in conflict situations.
- It is crucial to take time into consideration; one meeting should last a maximum of 60 minutes."

After selecting who will be the focus person and dialog person, the following activities or steps follow:

1. Reflecting on the topic based on the following questions. The dialogue person ask questions to the person in focus, while observers listen without commenting. (15 min)
 1. What do you already know about yourself and the topic? (Detailed description)
 2. What are your thoughts and considerations about the topic?
 3. What questions, doubts, and uncertainties are present?
 4. What does this topic mean for your professional life?
 5. How does the topic personally affect you and how?
 6. How would you describe your relationship with the actors related to the topic you are working on?
 7. What is your question? What do you want to get from the group?
2. Ideas, suggestions, or useful advice from a personal perspective by the group, directed to the person whose issue was in focus. The idea is for observers to share their experiences and perspectives, rather than delving into the topic or providing advice to the person in focus. (15 min)
3. The focus person in reflects on what was useful among all that they have heard. (10 min)

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