

A photograph of a man with a beard, wearing a grey t-shirt and black overalls, holding a young child in a purple jacket. The child is laughing joyfully. They are outdoors in a park with trees in the background.

PARTNERS IN SCHOOLS

A HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS
AND SCHOOLS WORKING
TOGETHER

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About this handbook

This handbook aims to offer guidance and highlight best practices to support school-family collaboration as well as parental engagement and support in schools. The overarching goal is to enrich parental engagement in the education of their children and to contribute to a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

This handbook is for school directors, teachers, educators, paraprofessionals and the wider community of schools in Slovakia. It includes the following sections:

Importance and benefits of parental engagement: This section explores why parental involvement is crucial, its significance, and its impact on children's education. It also outlines what parental engagement entails and how it is achieved.

1

Developing and maintaining fruitful parent-school collaboration: This section highlights the numerous opportunities for organizing meaningful family-parent involvement in the education of children. It offers various tips to schools, including school management and teachers, on how to build true partnership between schools and parents.

2

Supporting parental engagement: This section provides ideas for enhancing parenthood and parental involvement in schooling and learning of their children, aiming to improve not only students' progress but also to strengthen the role of schools as a key institution of the local community, and a safe space for exchanging and celebrating diversity and inclusion.

3

Pulling it all together: This section synthesizes the proposed strategies to support family involvement and collaboration between teachers (school) and parents (family) and the local community.

4

Throughout this handbook, special attention is given to engagement with parents and families from vulnerable populations, including refugees from conflict and war-affected areas (such as children and families from Ukraine), families of children with developmental disabilities and learning difficulties, children from families of low socio-economic status, from communities, and families exposed to multiple risks (biological and environmental).



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1 IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Why parental engagement matters

Engaging families in their children's education is crucial throughout the child's academic journey, and it's especially beneficial if initiated in the early years. Effective partnerships between schools and families at each stage of education should be supported through school policies and pedagogical practices that promote and encourage parental involvement, with a special focus on the most vulnerable children and families.

Parental engagement from the early years impacts children's overall development and learning. As children's first and most influential teachers, parents know their child best. Their engagement from the early years has positive impacts on the child's overall development and learning, including identifying learning gaps or developmental challenges, supporting a smooth transition to formal schooling and connecting with the communities. By being actively involved, parents can better communicate with teachers and schools to understand their child's learning progress and challenges, as well as jointly address issues.

Parental engagement fosters positive attitudes towards education and learning.

When parents get involved in the school life of their children, nurture their perseverance and persistence, and help children overcome challenges, they help children build a positive attitude toward education and motivate children to appreciate learning.¹ This is particularly important for vulnerable families facing multiple risks and requiring support for complex needs (such as health and psychosocial needs, traumatic experiences, low socioeconomic status of parents, disabilities, difficulties in learning, etc.), as children from such families benefit greatly from developing an intrinsic motivation for learning.

Furthermore, parents who are involved in the schooling of their children make learning a joint adventure² that can translate into long-lasting benefits:

- supervision of children's learning and homework can increase school attendance;
- parental modeling of positive behaviors and attitudes towards school, as well as establishment of an enabling learning environment at home, make children reach higher academic achievements;³

¹ Link: <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/issue-briefs/improve-learning/parental-support-to-learning>

² Goodall, J. and Vorhaus, J., with the help of Carpentieri, J.D., Brooks, G., Akerman, R. and Harris, A. (2011), 'Review of Best Practice in Parental Engagement: Practitioners' Summary'. Research report DFE-RR156. Department for Education. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182508/DFE-RR156.pdf

³ Castro, M.; Expósito-Casas, E.; López-Martín, E.; Lizasoain, L.; Navarro-Asencio, E.; Gaviria, J.L. 2015. "Parental involvement on student academic achievement: A meta-analysis," In: *Educational Research Review*, 14, 33–46.

- parents' engagement can empower children to face potential learning barriers and help improve their self-esteem and self-confidence;
- daily exchanges on school matters, rules and relationships within the school community enhance children's social skills and behavior.

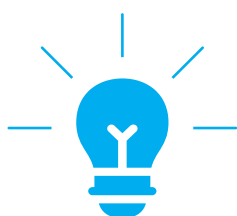
Parental engagement boosts parents' skills. Being actively involved and well-informed about their child's education and school life helps parents to become:

- more confident in parenting skills and supporting learning at home;
- more responsive and sensitive to children's needs;
- better equipped to be in leadership roles:
 - in school activities, both informally (communicating with school staff and parents) and formally (participating in governing bodies or parents association);
 - in the community, to advocate for improving education policies.⁴

Parental engagement contributes to building schools' cohesive community.

Schools are trustworthy meeting places for teachers, parents and students. When schools enable everyone's needs, competencies, and skills to be welcomed and respected, not only do they support student's learning and academic achievements, but they also help position life-long learning as an important community value.

Parental engagement also helps foster inclusive and intercultural values and policies in schools, creating a safe and inclusive environment to enrich children's well-being. Regular exchanges among teachers, parents and students enable more effective communication and understanding of everyone's backgrounds and needs, which can help promote and value appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism. This can also empower both schools and families to work together as partners to help children overcome socio-economic, cultural and learning barriers.



**THINK
AND REFLECT**

1. Take a moment to think about your daily activities and practices at school. How do you teach, interact with students, colleagues and parents? How do these align with your teaching objectives and help your students learn? Is it clear to parents what children are learning and why?
2. In your school, what are some of the benefits of school-family collaboration (for children, parents and school) that you can identify?

⁴ Link: <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/revieweducationpolicies/#!node=41727&filter=all>

What does “parental engagement” mean?

Based on global approaches and research on partnerships between schools and families, six types of parental involvement/engagement modalities have been identified (see Figure 1).⁵ This approach presents parental involvement/engagement as a continuum, which focuses on the relationship between parents and their children’s learning.

Six types of parental involvement/engagement



Figure 1: Joyce Epstein's categories of parental involvement

⁵ Six Types of Family Involvement Every School Should Consider, Walden University, <https://www.waldenu.edu/online-masters-programs/ms-in-education/resource/six-types-of-family-involvement-every-school-should-consider>



Type 1: Parenting

The parent-child relationship is central to a child's growth and development (including social-emotional and cognitive development, school success, and mental and physical health). Parents play a significant role in helping children build and refine their knowledge and skills as well as their learning expectations, beliefs, goals, and coping strategies. They introduce children to the social environment where they develop understandings of themselves and their place and value in society. These understandings then influence children's choices and experiences over their life course.

Parenting is thus an essential activity upon which children's growth and development are dependent. Schools can assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child development, and setting home conditions that support children's learning. Parents can assist schools in understanding families, and in creating school environments that are responsive to the families' strengths and needs.



Type 2: Communicating

Schools must be open for parental involvement and provide the opportunity for parents to express their views regarding the education of their children. They should promote parental involvement, taking into account matters or issues of interest to parents, providing information that helps parental engagement, identifying in early stages potential difficulties and learning opportunities, to enable the most effective support to children. Through quality, ongoing and effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programs and student progress, schools are demonstrating their commitment and responsibility for the learning and well-being of students.



Type 3: Volunteering

Parents can be involved through different volunteer activities in schools, including extracurricular activities, assisting teachers in the classrooms, appearing as a guest speaker, or fundraising for the school. Volunteering offers the opportunity to leverage parents' interests, experiences, skills and talents.



Type 4: Learning at Home

The involvement of parents/families with their children's learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-linked activities and decisions, is one of the essential influences teachers can make through their collaboration with families. Effective parental support at home, such as discussing school activities and helping with homework, and involvement at school by taking part in parent-school meetings

with teachers or school principals, can encourage children's positive attitudes towards school, their engagement and participation, learning motivation and academic achievements.

Type 5: Decision-Making



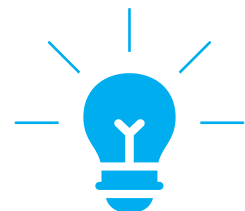
Decision making processes include families in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through parents associations, school councils, communities, and other parent organizations. To enable decision-making processes that are anchored in democratic values and human/child rights, it is important to establish open communication channels so that the voices of all parents and children, including those from vulnerable populations, can be heard and duly considered.

Type 6: Collaborating with the Community



The surrounding community also plays a critical role in educating children and often functions as an additional support to parents in creating safe neighborhoods and a healthy learning environment for their children. Parents and schools can work together to coordinate resources and services for families, children and schools, connecting with local institutions, businesses, agencies, and other groups that provide services in the community.

1. Looking at the six types of parental involvement/engagement, which one(s) are in practice in your school? Which ones are not, and why?
2. How do you engage with families from vulnerable, at risk and disadvantaged groups?
3. If you have children from Ukraine, children of foreigners or children from ethnic minorities in your school, how do you engage their families?



**THINK
AND REFLECT**



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2 DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING PARENT-SCHOOL COLLABORATION

Factors that influence parental engagement

The ability of parents to be more engaged in the education and learning of their children and in collaboration with school and teachers involves a mix of personal, social and institutional factors. It requires, from both schools and families, certain amount of knowledge, skills, motivation, and willingness to timely consider all opportunities and risks to maintain effective and fruitful collaboration to enhance children's learning and achievements.

Personal factors like language barriers, low education level, and low self-confidence, as well as negative past experiences with schooling (such as discrimination, bullying, and social exclusion), may make parents less motivated and distrustful of teachers and schools. To address these factors, schools can provide specific support focusing on building trust and preventing past experiences from coloring their child's schooling.

Socio-economic challenges are common among vulnerable families such as refugees, families with children with disabilities or with developmental and learning difficulties, foster families, single parent families, etc. These challenges impact children's access to educational resources that could support their learning and achievements. For such families, there are usually different intertwined risks, so they need stronger, tailor-made individualized, multiple, and long-term support provided by school staff, school parents, and the wider community.

Some parents also face **time constraints**, particularly in single-parent families that are juggling work and childcare responsibilities. Those families need support and understanding by offering flexibility in scheduling meetings, events, teacher-parent individualized meetings, and other school activities to help ensure their participation.

Principles of effective and meaningful parent/school collaboration

To foster effective parent-school collaboration and overcome potential barriers, it's crucial to establish agreed-upon principles for parental involvement as follows:

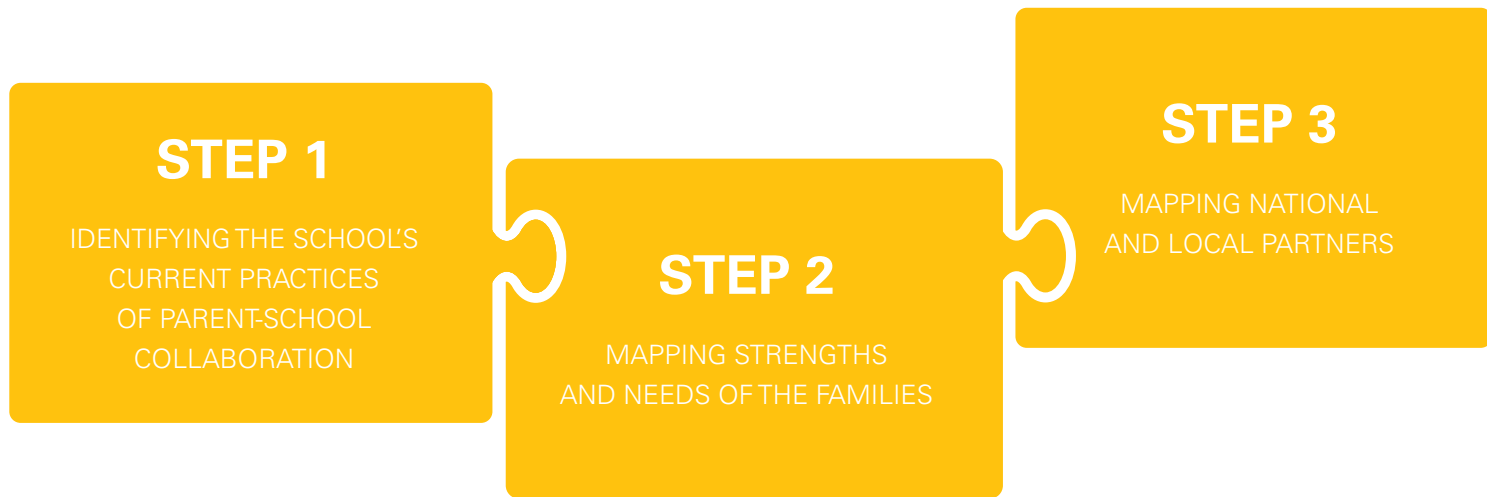
1. Building **mutual respect**, ensuring high sensitivity and tailor-made approaches toward vulnerable families (from single parent families; refugee families; children with disabilities, health issues, facing domestic violence, etc.);
2. Adopting a **strengths-based approach**, recognizing, valuing and respecting the capacities and strengths of parents to provide the best for their children;
3. **Overcoming biases and increasing cultural sensitivity and diversity awareness**, enhancing intercultural connections and intercultural environment and learning;
4. **Promoting an inclusive approach** through sharing responsibilities, providing individualized and diversified learning opportunities, and introducing innovations to address the specific needs of children so that no children are left behind;
5. **Ensuring open, honest two-way communication** building trusting school-family partnership as a basis for parental involvement, taking into account possible language and cultural barriers and focusing on the most vulnerable families/parents;
6. **Problem-solving and results-oriented learning** to increase student's and parent's positive attitudes, learning motivation and achievements;
7. **Collaboratively setting and understanding academic and behavioral expectations** for students, ensuring both parents and teachers are on the same page regarding the goals and standards for the child's education;
8. **Flexible collaboration framework, assessments and feedback** regarding the quality of collaboration and parental engagement, based on satisfaction and expected changes to accommodate differences and dynamics of parental involvement, including using online tools for remote support.

In light of these principles, a successful partnership is more likely to happen if the school proactively approaches families' needs and strengths by:

- **adjusting activity schedules** with consideration for diverse family structures and needs (including single parents, high number of children in Roma families, full-time working hours, limited parental availability, remote homes, and transportation constraints, etc.);
- **proactively addressing potential communication gaps** arising from language barriers, ineffective communication channels, and the absence of a standardized communication platform. Providing a variety of communication channels ensures that every family can receive important updates or announcements;
- **creating an inclusive, collaborative environment** that embraces and respects the diversity of each family and the different ways of parental involvement;
- **ensuring consistent parental understanding** of educational practices, teaching methods and pedagogical approaches. This proactive approach helps avoid tensions and enhances collaboration in supporting children's learning.



How schools can strengthen parent-school collaboration



When schools and parents unite, they cultivate a more supportive, enriching, and impactful educational experience for students. The following steps should be considered to strengthen parent-school collaboration.

Step 1: Identifying the school's current practices of parent-school collaboration,

in particular looking for what works well. It is necessary to consider different forms and channels of communication, and create together with the family tailor-made strategies and approaches that are responsive to their needs and priorities. Schools and teachers can rely on their experiences and good practices, as well as look for ideas through professional exchanges with colleagues from other schools, at professional and teachers-parents associations, conferences, events.

Step 2: Mapping strengths and needs of the families (targeting families that would benefit from greater parent-school collaboration, such as vulnerable families), and creating effective strategies to support parents' full participation and engagement in children's learning (see the ANNEX, Table 1). Different ways to map the strengths and needs of the families include:

- Online surveys, workshops, focus group discussions and teachers-parents feedback sessions. To avoid language and cultural barriers that could hinder effective communication and findings, it is recommended to use professional translation or ask for help from parents who speak the language(s).
- Home visiting should be considered, in particularly for hard to reach families, living in segregated or remote areas, with serious living or health issues.

STEP 4

ARTICULATING THE
COMMITMENT TO PARENTAL
ENGAGEMENT IN KEY
SCHOOL DOCUMENTS

STEP 5

DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR
IMPROVING PARENT-SCHOOL
COLLABORATION (INCLUDING
MONITORING OF ITS
IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS)

The visiting team could include school representatives (teachers, support team staff) as well as responsible local authorities and other community representatives (such as a local non-profit organization) if relevant.

Step 3: Mapping national and local partners that can empower collaboration with families, leveraging diverse resources and supporting services, aiming to enhance the overall educational experience of students. This includes:

- **Community-based organizations** (CSOs) with a focus on education, family support, and community development, at national and local level, parent associations or a prominent family support organization (local Roma CSOs and Roma community leaders) that offer resources and guidance, local community centers and agencies or neighborhood associations that host educational workshops for families.
- **Government agencies** overseeing education and family welfare, such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Families, or national family service agencies which provide information on education policies and support programs, as well as local/district government agencies, local school district offices, social services departments, or municipal education departments, responsible for education and community services.
- **Business and corporate partners** with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives related to education and family well-being (company offering scholarships, mentorship programs, or sponsoring school events).
- **Non-profit organizations** focused on education and family services, specifically supporting specialized family counseling, mental health, educational advocacy, local organizations (including parental CSOs) offering afterschool programs, tutoring services, or family counseling.

- **Media and communication outlets or platforms** interested in promoting education and family engagement, newspapers, radio stations, TV channels featuring educational programs or family-related contents should be a part of school-family partnership.

Step 4: Articulating the commitment to parental engagement in key school documents (school development plan, school curricula etc.), highlighting the goals and objectives of the collaboration as the foundation for a shared vision.

Step 5: Developing a plan for improving parent-school collaboration (including monitoring of its implementation progress). This is the crux of the school's strategies to address any gaps and challenges for effective parent-school collaboration.

Different forms of collaboration in the Slovak context

Different forms of collaboration are considered in schools in Slovakia:

"According to the possibilities of the school, the school's cooperation with the family can be divided into two basic groups, namely group forms of cooperation with parents and individual forms of cooperation.

Group forms of cooperation with parents may include:

- lectures and discussions on selected topics that parents themselves consider to be the most relevant at the moment (e.g. How to live with a teenager, Aggressive behavior of children at school, Bullying and its forms, Children's neuroses...),
- informing parents about innovative programs, innovative curricula and school curricula,

- organizing training programs for parents of children with developmental learning disabilities (dyslexia, inorthography, dyscalculia), etc.

Individual forms of cooperation with parents may include:

- providing the most important information about the school, the school management and individual teachers, the structure of education, regular written, e-mail or telephone communications informing parents about the child's progress in learning and behavior, familiarization with the program of parent meetings in advance so that they can prepare questions and be more active,
- paying special attention to single-parent families, or families with an adopted child,
- regularly informing parents mainly about the positive aspects of the child, not only about problems."

Source: <https://www.skolskyportal.sk/skola-rodina/formy-spoluprace-skoly-rodicov>

Key strategies for schools to improve parent-school collaboration

As the plan for improving parent-school collaboration is developed, the following strategies can be considered.

Strategy 1

Developing clear and transparent policies that emphasize and prioritize parental involvement, using phrases such as “every family matters,” “parents are first and long-term teachers of children,” “empowered parents can support their children,” “learning can be attractive,” and “a whole school approach.”

Strategy 2

Showing respect to diverse cultural backgrounds and creating a school environment that embraces diversity, promotes cultural understanding, and actively involves parents in cultivating an inclusive community. This entails activities such as:

- Including families in planning culturally relevant events, providing welcoming and a friendly atmosphere; checking if all parents feel invited to collaborate.
- Arranging potluck dinners where families bring dishes from their cultural backgrounds to share (this can be at the classroom level). This provides an opportunity for parents to connect over food and learn more about each other’s culinary traditions.
- Setting up exhibitions or displays featuring artifacts, clothing, and items representing various cultures; parents can contribute items that hold significance to their heritage – for example, initiating projects where families create visual representations of their heritage. This could include family trees, heritage posters, or multimedia presentations that are then shared with the school community.

Strategy 3

Facilitating dialogue with parents to ensure mutual understanding, through appropriate and understandable communication materials, as well as through meetings. It is important to ensure that the two-way communications are accessible and inclusive. For example:

- Regular communication with home, informing families about school program and events;
- Deliberate actions to communicate positive news (for example, recognizing the child's achievements or good behaviour);
- Teachers being available in the room for informal chats before and immediately after school;
- Vulnerable families are continuously and fully informed of their child's progress.

Demonstrating respect for diversity by providing multilingual support

Providing multilingual support recognizes diverse language backgrounds, and helps emphasize the importance of embracing and leveraging linguistic diversity to create a more inclusive and enriching educational experience for all students. Adapt the following ideas based on the specific needs and context of your school:

- Establish book corners or resource centres within schools, offering a variety of multilingual books, educational materials, and resources.
- Provide bilingual learning materials and resources in classrooms to support students in their native language (for example, for Ukrainian refugee children).
- Engage families and local libraries to help collect textbooks, worksheets, and visual aids that facilitate comprehension; include also low-tech and high-tech solutions and devices to support and enhance language and communication skills for non-verbal students; if needed, include resources (professional translators and family members) to teach a few words or signs (for sign language), such as commonly used words (hello, goodbye, thank you, please, etc.) and use them in everyday routines and learning.
- Implement a language buddies program where students who are proficient in different languages are paired with those who need support, fostering peer-assisted learning.
- Organize events or weeks dedicated to celebrating cultural and linguistic diversity within the school community. This includes language festivals, cultural performances, and interactive workshops.
- Incorporate multilingual storytelling where students, teachers and parents share stories in their native languages. This promotes language appreciation and understanding.
- Conduct workshops for parents that focus on supporting language development at home. Provide resources and strategies for parents to reinforce language skills in their child's native language.
- Develop and implement inclusive language policies that recognize and validate the linguistic diversity within the school. Ensure that all languages spoken by students are acknowledged and respected.

Strategy 4

Clearly defining expectations (from both families and schools) related to parental engagement. This entails working together to identify how schools and parents can each contribute to children's learning and what kinds of support can be expected from the school. For vulnerable families, defining expectations will require a common understanding of learning and achievement, and demonstrating interest in the uniqueness and strengths of the families.

Strategy 5

Providing flexible options for involvement/engagement, including virtual meetings, weekend events, and asynchronous communication adjusted to the family needs

(dealing with language, flexible dates and timing, focusing on priorities and short-term goals, etc.).

Examples of flexible options

To reach all parents, the teachers at Belmont school in **Australia** care about how to schedule meetings with parents. Early afternoon (around 2pm) is a time that suits those parents who are collecting children at that time from school; while evening (around 7pm) is suitable for working parents. For some families (i.e. for single parents working in second shift), the dinner meetings

are most appreciated. As such, meetings in this school are scheduled at three different times for half an hour each, so that parents can make it to the meetings. Leaders of the school also ask families what suit them best and provide childcare during those meetings.

Source: <https://ero.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2021-05/Teaching-strategies-that-work-Parent-partnerships2.pdf>

Strategy 6:

Leveraging technology when possible, using online platforms, apps, and communication tools to keep parents informed, provide access to resources, and facilitate virtual engagement opportunities.

- For children whose mother tongue is not Slovak, additional learning support by parents and teachers could be needed. It is worth exploring language learning apps and tools that parents and children can use together: Duolingo, Babbel, or Rosetta Stone have family-friendly features. Connect with other parents through local community groups or online forums as sharing experiences and tips can be mutually beneficial.
- Utilize educational apps to help parents and children engage in learning at home – such as [Eductify](#), [Edujoy Games](#) and [FihaTralala](#). Other interesting apps from North America (such as Little Pim, Gus on the Go, or ABC mouse) can be an inspiration for incorporating interactive language learning activities.
- Search for available free online education possibilities.

Examples of leveraging technology

- In **Finland** uses online platforms that facilitate communication between parents and teachers. These platforms enable real-time updates on a child's progress, upcoming assignments, and school events, fostering continuous engagement.
- In **Slovakia**, the EduPage application is used, providing all necessary information about students' educational results as well as a channel for communication between teachers and parents.

Strategy 7

Promoting parental engagement in school activities and events. For example:

- Throughout the year, different activities and events (sports activities, extracurricular activities, whole school events, school curriculum, etc.) can be organized to involve parents. It is important to engage parents/families in the planning and organization of such activities and events. An example is "Family

Literacy Nights”, where parents and children engage in reading activities, literacy workshops, and book-related events.

- At the end of the school year, the school can organize an exhibition to celebrate achievements. Each class (including teachers, parents and students) can make their own poster presenting their individual and teams/class achievements. Families can also be encouraged to showcase their achievements, celebrating their efforts and their children’s learning successes.

Examples of activities to promote parental engagement in school activities and events

At **East Taieri School in Otago, New Zealand**, teachers involved parents in authentic mathematics learning with their child, as part of the Ministry of Education’s “Accelerating Learning Literacy” (ALL) and “Accelerating Learning in Mathematics” (ALiM) initiatives. This entailed:

- Every second Friday, children had “Breakfast Math” where they shared their progress and learning strategies with parents during breakfast time. Parents are welcomed in the schools to learn about their child’s math learning, while enjoying a shared breakfast.
- Children went on a “Math Big Day Out” with their teacher where they visited their parents at work to see mathematics in action in the workplace (café, post office, library, supermarket, etc.).
- At the end of the program, the teachers met with each child and their parents to discuss the child’s progress. Teachers gave families a toolkit of ideas, and children shared the knowledge and strategies they had mastered with their parents.⁶

In Slovakia, schools organize “Celebration of learning” events. The objectives of this type of event are:

- To present to the parents what the students learned at school, how they mastered the subject.
- To support the cooperation of children and parents.
- To encourage cooperation between parents.
- To increase the understanding of parents for the home preparation of children for teaching and to empathize with the role of the child.

At learning celebrations, parents have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the methods of work in the classroom and with the results achieved.

Most often, after completing a thematic unit of the curriculum or a part of the year-long theme, students present how they mastered the curriculum, what they learned. They apply their cleverness, acquired skills and knowledge in solving various tasks, in which they often cooperate with their parents. In an experiential way, parents get to know e.g. methods of developing children’s social and personal competences, the functioning of classroom rules and procedures.⁷

⁶ Source: <https://ero.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2021-05/Teaching-strategies-that-work-Parent-partnerships2.pdf>

⁷ Source: <https://www.skola21.sk/kniznica/spolupraca/spolupraca-s-rodicmi/dalej>

Key considerations for the education system regarding enhanced parental engagement

Improving parental engagement requires a systemic approach. As such, the following strategies should be considered by school founders, municipalities and national institutions, as relevant.

Consideration 1: Integrating parental involvement goals and strategies into educational policies at the district and national levels, ensuring they are inclusive and accommodate diverse family structures and needs of most vulnerable families, those with diverse backgrounds, languages, cultural norms, and socio-economic statuses.

Consideration 2: Including parental engagement as a key topic in teacher training programs and ongoing professional development and provide trainings on effective parent-teacher communication and meaningful collaboration (for both pre- and in-service trainings).

Consideration 3: Ensuring budgetary provisions for programmes, workshops, and technology that facilitate effective communication and collaboration between schools and parents.

Consideration 4: Fostering partnerships between schools, community organizations and local stakeholders to provide additional resources, support services, and engagement opportunities for parents/schools.

Consideration 5: Developing leadership programs that encourage parents to take active roles in decision-making processes and contribute to school governance (as an example, [Efektívne rodičovstvo](#)).

1. Which vulnerable population of students/families do you recognize in your school, and what are key considerations for establishing collaboration with these families?
2. Write down what you need to change in the school-family cooperation in order to increase the involvement of parents in children's learning & schooling.
3. What were the most important insights from this section for you? Which strategies and examples inspire you the most?





Bebbo app

UNICEF's parenting app Bebbio helps parents provide their children with best start possible. With information about nutrition, play and emotions, Bebbio provides answers to the questions parents have on raising children. The app supports and guides parents through the various stages of their children's peak early development years, from 0 to 6 years old.

Teachers and schools are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Bebbio app and promote it with parents/caregivers as a way to engage with and empower families.



GOOGLE
PLAYSTORE



APPLE
APP STORE





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3 SUPPORTING PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

This section provides some strategies, tips and examples of how teachers, educators, paraprofessionals and others working in the school can solidify their practices to support parents and engage them meaningfully in the life of the school.

Strategies for strengthening parenting skills

Schools can create a learning community among teachers, parents, students and local stakeholders to help strengthen parenting skills. This supportive environment empowers parents to support their children in their learning. Here are practical tips for supporting parents in strengthening their parenting skills:

TIP 1. OFFER REGULAR WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING SESSIONS, ONLINE RESOURCES AND WEBINARS FOR PARENTS

- These should cover various aspects of parenting: effective communication, positive discipline, setting boundaries, self-esteem building, etc.
- The learning opportunities can also be in the form of credible online materials and webinars on child development, parenting strategies, and child's behavior management.

Examples of workshops, trainings, online resources and webinars for parents

- In **Florida, USA**, some schools have established "Parent Academies." These academies offer workshops, courses, and resources to empower parents with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively support their children's education.
- In **Slovakia**, the Union of Mother Centres offers an "[Academy of Practical Parenting](#)," which offer a series of workshops/lectures with expert guests on various topics relating to child development. These include opportunities for non-formal learning and sharing of experiences through parenting groups, facilitated discussions as well as courses (one-off seminars, longer courses, etc.), conversations and lectures.

TIP 2. SET UP AND MANAGE PARENTING SUPPORT GROUPS

- These are spaces where parents can share experiences, exchange expert's advices, and learn from one another. For vulnerable families, such support groups can be an outreach mechanism. The support groups can also help introduce language exchange programs where parents can learn basic phrases in different languages spoken within the school community, promoting linguistic diversity and encouraging cross-cultural communication.

Example of parent support groups

- In **Slovakia**, the Union of Mother Centres and the Platform of Families of Children with Disabilities offer parenting support groups, where parents have a safe space to learn and rely on one another to address different challenges as well as celebrate joys of parenting.

TIP 3. ARRANGE SPECIFIC SOCIAL MEETING SPACES FOR PARENTS AT SCHOOL

- **Parent library** with books and materials that can cover a range of parenting topics, helping parents gain insights and new perspectives and tips for parenting and learning at home.
- **Space for peaceful individual one-on-one consultations with experts**, including individualized guidance and practical tips addressing specific parenting challenges (developmental and/or learning difficulties, peer relationship issues, identity development crisis).
- **Parenting challenges discussion forums** (online or in-person spaces) can also be offered, where parents can openly share difficulties, seek advices, and receive support from the community.

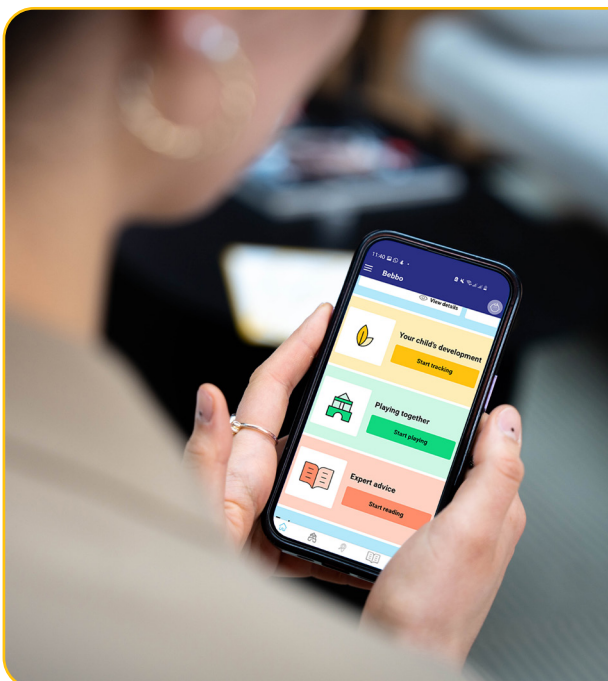
Examples of social meeting spaces for parents at school

- In the **United Kingdom**, some schools have established Parental Engagement Hubs. These hubs serve as central spaces for parents to access resources, attend workshops, and engage in discussions about supporting their children's learning.
- In **Slovakia** many kindergartens and primary schools regularly organize "Open Days". At Open Days, parents can try the methods and forms of

learning that the schools apply in the education of their children. They also have the opportunity to participate in discussion groups, exchanging with others on parenting experiences in preparing children for school, consult individually with teachers and experts (such as special educators, psychologists, school nurses, etc.).

TIP 4. RECOMMEND RELEVANT PARENTING APPS AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

- These resources should cover various and specific aspects of parenting.



Examples of parenting apps and online platforms

- Únia materských centier
<https://www.materskecentra.sk/>
- Akadémia praktického rodičovstva
<http://www.akademiarodicovstva.sk/#>
- Slovenská rada rodičovských združení – Projekt Na deťoch nám záleží – <https://srrz.sk/projekt-na-detoch-nam-zalezi-aj-v-21-storoci-diskusne-forum/>

Bebbo app

The Bebbio app is designed to lend a helping hand to parents, with easy parenting tips on topics like breast pumps, baby weaning, learning, toys, child protection and much more. Bebbio provides users with information based on studies and UNICEF's expertise and helpful, interactive tools to help nurture and aid their child's health and development.

Strategies for supporting teacher-parent communication

Regular and honest two-way communication between parents and teachers is critical. This involves setting a welcoming atmosphere, providing positive feedback and recognition, conducting one-on-one meetings and conferences, utilizing supportive technology solutions and setting clear expectations from both parties. Here are some tips that can strengthen teacher-parent communication:

TIP 1. ENSURE LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY IF THERE ARE LANGUAGE BARRIERS

- Disseminate translated materials or ensure interpreters to enable effective communication with parents of diverse linguistic backgrounds;
- Use available web and phone applications including Augmentative Alternative Communication devices for families and students with complex speaking and communication needs – this can be a hi-tech solution (<https://globalsymbols.com/symbolsets?locale=en>) or a low-tech solution (<https://www.twinkl.com/teaching-wiki/pictogram>).

TIP 2. ORGANIZE PARENT INFORMATION WORKSHOPS AND SESSIONS

- Cover various learning and teaching topics (strategies and methodologies) to involve parents actively in their child's learning journey.
 - for parents with language barriers, many schools are offering courses for parents in learning the language children are educated in school (including courses in Slovak language for parents from Ukraine);
 - for parents with low resources, teachers can print some learning materials (working sheets) with clear learning tasks for children and for parents to support learning;
- Discuss with parents the main characteristics of an enabling learning environment at home, and offer concrete suggestions of learning through play (using pebbles, leaves, chestnuts for practicing math in nature; using out-door activities for practicing team work through sports; practicing imagination by drawing in sand, snow; learning volume calculation in water games; estimating and measuring distances by foot in the backyard or part; etc.).

TIP 3. ENABLE RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATIONS

- Respond promptly to parent's inquiries, and address parent concerns or questions in a timely manner, showing that their input is valued and seriously considered;
- Establish a routine for communication updates (using school bulletin boards, info-desks, digital platforms and apps, emails, forums), so that parents know when to expect information and to reduce uncertainty;
- Introduce short printed paper messages of important information that parents must sign and send back to confirm they agree or are aware of it (translated to their mother tongue to ensure mutual understanding).



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Strategies for empowering parents on volunteering and decision-making

Through practical strategies engaging parents actively in volunteering and participatory decision-making, schools can create a more inclusive, collaborative, and supportive educational environment.

TIP 1. CREATE PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS

Councils where parents can discuss school matters, provide input, and collaborate in decision-making processes. Usually, councils are composed of representatives from each class, and parents can nominate themselves or someone else from the class to the council. Teachers should highlight the importance of including the representatives of vulnerable groups.

Examples of parent advisory councils

- In **Scotland**, parent councils often participate in the selection of principals. Schools in Scotland consult with both staff and parents in designing programs of study, selecting subjects taught in particular schools and defining course content.
- In **Türkiye**, some decisions, including those on the allocation of resources, are taken by the central government with the involvement of parent-teachers' associations.
- In **Slovakia**, the Parents' Association at schools delegates its representatives to the School Council. Through them, parents can directly influence the school's strategic intentions, participate in the selection of the school's principal, and have the opportunity to submit proposals for ways of cooperation between the school and students' families.⁸

TIP 2. ENCOURAGE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS

- Establish Parent Associations as a platform for parents to volunteer in school, voice their concerns, and contribute to decisions impacting the school community.
- Provide diverse volunteering opportunities with a range of roles, from classroom assistance in organizing events, to engaging parents based on their interests and availability.
- Provide opportunities for parents to contribute their views and ideas, especially related to the improvement of education process, school atmosphere and values, inclusion, respectful relationships, for example through digital platforms.

⁸ Source: <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/revieweducationpolicies/#!node=41727&filter=all>

- Organize “family culture” events, where families can promote their families (habits, sub-cultures, communication styles, favorite games, books, how they celebrate holidays, etc.).

TIP 4. ENSURE DEMOCRATIC AND INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

- Check if key bodies within the school (such as School Councils, Parent Associations, etc.) include a range of parent representatives, in particular from vulnerable families, promoting and practicing democracy and inclusiveness.
- Organize and provide flexible decision-making meetings during different times of the day to accommodate parents with varying schedules and commitments.
- Before they express their thoughts and votes, ensure parents are well informed and understand the relevant facts related to the decision making topics:
- Provide relevant materials in a timely manner to ensure parents do not feel under pressure in making decisions;
- Ensure that all representatives of vulnerable families participate, or if they can't, collect in advance their views to ensure that their voices are considered.

Example of activities of volunteering team, school council or Parent Association:

1. Creating a parents' room/family centre as a sharing and meeting point, collecting diverse family resources and welcoming all families.
2. Send an annual post card (or online) survey to identify talents, availabilities and locations of potential parent volunteers.
3. Create an information tree with the key information for supporting families, especially the most vulnerable and those in need.
4. Create a family board to present family cultures and backgrounds.
5. Humanitarian aid day/action, or similar activities to help those affected by conflicts and natural disasters.

Promoting learning at home

Learning starts at home from the first days of life, and parents are considered as children's first and life-long teachers. As such, the learning environment at home is essential for children's healthy development from the early years. Teachers are well-placed to provide practical advice and guide parents to provide home learning assistance to their children (see the ANNEX, Table 1).

TIP 1. SUPPORT PARENTS TO COLLECT RELEVANT LEARNING RESOURCES, WITH ATTENTION TO AGES/EDUCATION LEVEL AND SPECIFIC NEEDS:

- Help parents establish an enabling learning space at home (it should be quiet and conducive for focused learning);
- Advise parents, particularly those with low resources, on how they can access free and relevant online and paper-based resources (in the school, city library or other places) to offer more opportunities for out-of-school learning with their children (e.g. free online platforms, books for children in their mother tongue, work sheets, other learning materials for different subjects).

TIP 2. WORK WITH PARENTS TO DEVELOP INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING STRATEGIES BASED ON THE CHILD'S STRENGTHS, WHEN NEEDED.

- For children with disabilities, it is of utmost importance to build on their strengths, and to harmonize teacher's and parent's priorities and expectations.
- Instead of decreasing learning expectations, increase support through parent-teacher collaboration, defining real goals and implementing step-by-step strategies.

TIP 3. ENCOURAGE PARENTS TO ESTABLISH DAILY READING AND TALKING ROUTINES

- Promote reading as a shared family activity – like family reading sessions.
- Recommend interactive reading and storytelling.
- Support parents to read together with their children and discuss the content of what they read.

TIP 4. HELP PARENTS TO EMPHASIZE LEARNING THROUGH PLAY (SEE THE ANNEX, TABLE 1)

- Guide them to incorporate certain educational contents into playtime.
- Guide them to turn games into opportunities for skill-building.
- Empower parents to learn with children through hands-on projects, experiments and educational games.

TIP 5. ENCOURAGE PARENTS TO FOSTER CRITICAL THINKING OF THEIR CHILDREN

- Engage children in family discussions or debates on various topics, relevant for their ages. Encourage children to express their opinions, support their arguments, and consider alternative viewpoints.
- Introduce problem-solving challenges in daily life or family decision-making puzzles that require logical reasoning. Collaborate with children to explore various solutions.
- Discuss current events and encourage children to analyze news articles. Explore different perspectives on the same issue.
- Conduct simple science experiments at home. Encourage children to ask questions, form hypotheses, and analyze results.
- Watch movies together and afterward discuss the plot, characters, and underlying messages. Encourage children to think critically about the content.

An online platform to promote critical thinking activities:

The “Reading and writing for critical thinking association” has an online portal with resources to support parents with developing critical thinking with their children. (<https://rwct.ngo/>). The Czech language version is available here: <https://kritickemysleni.cz/>.

TIP 6. CONDUCT REGULAR CHECK-INS WITH PARENTS (MEETINGS OR CONFERENCES) TO DISCUSS THE CHILD’S PROGRESS, STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Use digital communication platforms (e.g., emails, messaging apps, or online portals) to send updates, reminders, and individualized feedback on students’ academic and behavioral performance.
- Send out monthly newsletters (or teacher’s blog or website) or a news board (it can be physical or virtual), highlighting classroom activities, upcoming events, important announcements, and academic focuses, include tips for parents to support learning at home. These can serve as visual communication tools as well.
- Implement student-led discussions with parents where students actively participate in discussions about their progress. This approach encourages student accountability and ownership.
- Make periodic phone calls to parents to discuss individual student progress, address concerns, and celebrate achievements, having in mind personalized communication builds trust.⁹

TIP 7. CELEBRATE TOGETHER

Celebrate together learning milestones and children’s achievements, with awards and acknowledgment, and encouraging continued learning. Adapt the following ideas based on the preferences and dynamics of your school community, ensuring that each event includes students and families from various vulnerable families. Teach the audience to use sign language to express their recognition and appreciation for students and families that don’t use verbal communication.

- **Student of the month** awards for outstanding achievements, improvement, or positive behavior. Hold a ceremony where parents are invited to celebrate with teachers.
- **Parent-teacher award banquet** as an annual awards event that celebrates both students and parents for their contributions to the school community. Acknowledge parents’ involvement and support.
- **Student showcases** or exhibitions where children display their projects, artworks, or accomplishments. Invite parents to attend and actively participate in recognizing and celebrating their child’s achievements.
- Incorporate **multilingual storytelling sessions** where students, teachers, and even parents share stories in their native languages, promoting language appreciation and understanding.
- **Organize recognition assemblies** led by students where they present their achievements to parents and teachers, empowering students’ self-esteem and public speaking skills.

9 Sheldon, S. B. Parents’ Social Networks and Beliefs as Predictors of Parental Involvement, *The Elementary School Journal* 102(4), Johns Hopkins University, 2002

Fostering collaboration with the community

Fostering collaboration between parents, school and the community is crucial for a holistic and supportive educational environment. By implementing a “whole-school approach” that connects all actors in the school environment and community, schools can create a collaborative network that positively impacts student success and well-being.

A whole-school approach refers to a comprehensive and coordinated strategy that **involves the entire school community, including students, teachers, administrators, support staff, parents, and the community, in addressing a specific issue or goal**. This approach recognizes that the school environment is interconnected, and that to bring about effective change, efforts must be implemented across all levels of the school.

For more information on the whole school approach, please refer to:

- Pisoňová, M. 2021. *Teoretické, empirické a praxeologické aspekty riadenia vzdelávacích inštitúcií*. Bratislava: Wolters Kluwer.
- Pol, M. 2007. *Škola v proměnách*. Brno: Masarykova Univerzita.
- Pavlov, I. a kol. 2021. *Plánovanie profesijného rozvoja učiteľstva v škole*. Bratislava: MPC.

Here are some tips on how to connect the whole school with the local community:

TIP 1. ORGANIZE COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND INTERCULTURAL EVENTS

- Organize fairs, sport days, or cultural festivals at the school.
- Organize community events during non-working days or during holidays, in collaboration with parent council, CSOs, young volunteers, at the City hall/municipality center or other places where parents usually gather to socialize (e.g. local church, cultural center, city library etc.).
- Establish formal partnerships with local businesses, organizations, and community groups.

TIP 2. ESTABLISH JOINT PARENT-COMMUNITY BODIES

- Introduce committees, advisory boards, central hubs where parents and community members collaborate on decision-making processes.
- Organize meetings and events where parents and communities can share their skills, knowledge, resources, project experiences, fostering a sense of social responsibility.

TIP 3. OPEN SCHOOL FACILITIES

- Offer workshops, information sessions and activities on school premises, on topics of interest to both parents and community members (e.g. improving access for disadvantaged families, providing transportation solutions for families living far away, provision of financial support for home visiting, community-related information and activities, etc.).

- Offer extracurricular and social activities on school premises (ex. language courses for parents, yoga, dance, sports classes for parents, extracurricular activities for children led by parents).

TIP 4. SEEK COMMUNITY INPUT

- Ask both parents and community members through surveys and feedback forms to understand their perspectives and needs.
- Explore possibilities for improvement of local education policies toward vulnerable students and families (ex. revising financial support programs for low-income families, adjusting transportation lines and timing to increase access, etc.).

TIP 5. INTEGRATE COMMUNITY COLLABORATION INTO THE WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH AND OVERALL SCHOOL STRATEGY

- Align efforts of school staff, parents, and other local stakeholders for maximum impact. For example, through involvement in the work of the School Council, in which teachers, parents and the local government are represented.

TIP 6. CONNECTING COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS

- Engage community members, leveraging their expertise to support and guide individual and groups of students.
- Keep parents and community members continuously informed, engaged, and connected by leveraging online tools and social media.

1. Think about and plan outreach activities in collaboration with parents to investigate which children are not enrolled in schooling and what kind of support those families need.

2. Organize discussions within your school, ensuring parent's participation, with a focus on opening your school facilities for intercultural events to promote diversity and inclusiveness.

3. What kinds of activities are taking place in your classroom or school, involving local communities (businesses, institutions, etc.)?



**THINK
AND REFLECT**



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4 PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR LEADERS AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

Effective leadership and school management play an important role in fostering parental engagement in schools and at home. School management should create a supportive and collaborative environment that encourages active parental engagement, leading to positive outcomes for all – students, teachers, parents and the whole school community.

Here are strategies that school leaders and managers could consider when framing a supportive environment for parental engagement and fruitful and meaningful parent-school collaboration.

TIP 1. DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY, BASED ON A “WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH”

- Define a clear plan, outlining goals, activities, and responsibilities to guide the institution's efforts in engaging parents.
- Plan capacity-building for teachers and sensitize local community administrators to consider different ways, strategies, and activities they can implement, including budgeting, to ensure effective parental engagement.
- Be concrete in planning parental engagement: organize 'just drop in' sessions, establish an open-door policy in classrooms, create a class website with a dedicated space for questions and answers from parents, organize home visits to get the real picture about child's/parent's needs for support.

TIP 2. DEMONSTRATE LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

- Set a positive example of a leader's supportive role by active participation at events, meetings, and communication channels and media related to parental engagement.

TIP 3. ALLOCATE TIME, BUDGET AND RESOURCES

- Target specifically parental engagement initiatives and needs of most vulnerable families.
- Ensure dedicated resources are allocated for capacity building and empowerment of teachers and staff on building strong partnerships with parents.

TIP 4. FOSTER WELCOMING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

- Make it open, friendly, and inviting for all parents, in particular those with different cultural background and from vulnerable populations.
- Make all students, teachers and parents feel comfortable and valued in your school.

TIP 5. INCLUDE PARENTS IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

- Empower parents from vulnerable populations, ensuring that they are represented in any school activities, school body, etc.

- Promote a sense of ownership and partnership at the level of school staff, parents and students as well.

TIP 6. COLLABORATE WITH SCHOOL COUNCILS/PARENT ASSOCIATIONS

- Seek for their feedback and suggestions for improvement and innovation of education processes and school environment.
- Ensure that each vulnerable family is well represented in discussions and decision-making process.
- Create clear school policy related to the provision of additional and specific support for most vulnerable families.
- Provide specific help to the most vulnerable parents with multiple risks and barriers (help them in job recruitment, induction, performance management, professional development etc.).

TIP 7. REGULARLY ASSESS THE IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

- Make adjustments in accordance to needs, feedbacks and suggestions of parents.
- Prioritize parental engagement in school planning, monitoring and evaluation processes.

TIP 8. PARTNER WITH OTHER SCHOOLS

- Exchange experiences, knowledge and skills.
- Discover different modalities for successful leadership and school-parent collaboration.
- Pay attention and pick-up innovative practices and ideas for improvement in your school.



THINK AND REFLECT

1. Draft a school vision, emphasizing the crucial contribution of parental engagement to advancing the academic success and overall well-being of every student, including those from vulnerable families, families with children with disabilities, and diverse linguistic backgrounds.
2. What are the values and attitudes that you would like to see throughout the staff team? How can you demonstrate and model these values and attitudes?
3. Investigate different leadership modalities applicable for your management role and list how you can implement them in your school (including any capacity building required, etc.).

Annex

Table 1: Effective strategies to support parents' full participation and engagement

This table provides additional examples of strategies to support parental engagement, based on the topic of interest.

TOPIC	VISION	JOINT ACTIVITIES
ENHANCED ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS	Collaboratively plan on improving student academic performance with clear learning goals and effective study habits both at home and in school, especially targeting for children from Ukraine, from Roma communities, for children with education discontinuity in different reasons as well	Joint parent-teacher workshops focusing on subject-specific support and study strategies for supporting children's learning
EXAMPLE:	Curriculum information sessions or seminars can inform parents about the curriculum, teaching methods, and educational goals to help parents support their children's learning at home including concrete strategies for learning and discussing about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 minutes child-parent reading activity every day (in language they are learning at school) to 	enhance mutual (parent-child) learning support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "what new things I've learned today" - 2 minutes self-reflection exchange between child and parent "learning story" (notes about important learning success)
TOPIC	VISION	JOINT ACTIVITIES
HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN	Nurturing not only academic success but also child's overall well-being and personal growth (important for vulnerable children including Roma, refugees, children with learning difficulties) based on social-emotional learning	A mentorship program where parents and teachers jointly guide students in developing social and emotional skills to increase motivation for learning and preventing possible drop-out
EXAMPLE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "My Winning Story" (emotional notes in words or drawings, songs... about important accomplishment in social/peer connections) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "What am I proud of today" vignette (like of peer/team support) emotional reflection explain internal experience of the child/student
TOPIC	VISION	JOINT ACTIVITIES
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT	Open and transparent communication channels between the school and parents, ensuring active involvement in school activities and decision-making processes	Dedicated online platform for regular updates, event notifications, and collaborative discussions in chat rooms, round tables, coffee afternoon sessions etc. * secure translation and adjust date and time so everyone can participate
EXAMPLE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "digital literacy workshops" could guiding parents on how to navigate online platforms and support their children in using digital tools for learning "join our chat room" (digital or face-to-face), parent-to-parent sharing experiences, advising 	with experts, teachers, or with other parents, CSO activists (including Roma), more experienced parents (including Ukrainian families);



TOPIC

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND INCLUSIVITY



VISION

Celebrating and respecting diverse cultural backgrounds within the school community, fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment



JOINT ACTIVITIES

Multicultural events, where parents can share and celebrate their cultural traditions (supporting all to participate no matter of background, it is safe zone for illiterate parents)

* secure translation and adjust date and time so everyone can participate

EXAMPLE:

Multicultural Days where parents are invited to showcase their cultural heritage through food, music, dance, and traditional attire, including:

- “teach me your favorite song” event, with listening, singing and dancing with music from different countries, continents, cultures

- “my favorite book from a childhood” – reading and sharing experiences of values and culture artefacts
- “guess which one is my pancake” – guessing game with internationally spread sweets and sharing recipes (affordable to each family)



TOPIC

EMPOWERMENT OF PARENTAL SKILLS



VISION

Empowering parents with the necessary skills and knowledge to actively support their children's education at home



JOINT ACTIVITIES

Regular workshops in school on effective parenting strategies, understanding the curriculum, and utilizing educational resources

* secure translation and adjust date and time so everyone can participate

EXAMPLE:

- bi-monthly meetings of “school community of learners” (teachers and parents), discussions or short lectures by experts followed with Q&A, with different topics: responsive parenting, positive discipline, supportive parent authority, enabling and inclusive learning environment, transition to adolescence, etc.
- children should regularly set and shared learning goals with their parents and outline how they

planned to achieve goals and timeframes for reaching them. Every week parents can make a comment and send it to a teacher where they explained what the child was doing at home in relation to the goal. Sometimes, when child achieve the goal, they can suggested ideas of what they could do next.



TOPIC

COMMUNITY BUILDING



VISION

Strengthening the sense of learning community among parents, teachers, and students, fostering a collaborative and supportive network



JOINT ACTIVITIES

Family-oriented events, such as picnics, talent shows, or community service projects, to build stronger bonding

EXAMPLE:

Every year at **Siltamäki Primary School (Finland)** the entire school engages in a student-created and led musical where they write, conduct, and orchestrate a play including lyrics and music. From the general educators who teach lessons on storytelling, to the music teacher who help the students learn the art form of songwriting

and playing a variety of musical instruments, the entire school collaborates in bringing the music to life. Every child and faculty member plays a part in making the musical possible. This yearlong endeavor is possible due to the collaborative teamwork of the teachers, students, and administrators.¹⁰



TOPIC

STUDENT TRANSITION SUPPORT



VISION

Facilitating smooth transitions between grade levels or significant educational milestones or education institutions



JOINT ACTIVITIES

Established "buddy system" where experienced parents assist newcomers in navigating school processes

EXAMPLE:

Each transition through education system could be hard and painful, especially for vulnerable children, suffering from fragile motivation and low enthusiasm for schooling (like from substandard Roma settlements, traumatized and/or refugees – like from Ukraine, students with Autism spectrum disorder, with behavior and emotional challenges etc.); transition workshop that include visiting a new facilities in advance, meeting new peers and teachers, tracking roadmap from home to school and

vice versa, bringing in the backpack a personal things to comfort and provide emotional safety to a child and help in bridging gaps or differences, peer-to-peer support could be helpful in developing a new belonging, especially in the beginning of transition: special focus should be on students with disabilities (they can't reach upper floor in the wheelchairs, or can't use sign language if nobody use it in the school), it's necessary paying attention in advance.



TOPIC

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND FEEDBACK



VISION

For vulnerable families/students (like refugees from Ukraine, families with low income, with children with disabilities, Roma etc.) support should be continual and flexible, changing forms, topics, short-term goals and priorities (reachable and affordable), empowering culture of high expectations by seeking and valuing feedback from both parents and teachers



JOINT ACTIVITIES

Regular surveys and feedback sessions to assess the effectiveness of collaboration and make necessary adjustments; SEL should be included, as well as student's, parent's satisfaction of support provision, challenges and priorities for the coming days/weeks/months, as well;

EXAMPLE:

- considering crucial changes in child's learning, behavior, emotional skills may happen often and strongly impact learning, needs and satisfaction

assessment, at school or class level, should be periodical instead of midyear or annual, should be short and refer to a defined priorities.



TOPIC

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING FOCUS



VISION

Promoting the overall health and well-being of students by fostering healthy habits and supporting mental health initiatives



JOINT ACTIVITIES

Wellness programs integrated into the school curriculum and parents involved in discussions on student well-being

EXAMPLE:

- Parental fitness campaign "let's run/walk together" at first Saturday in month, during school year, school staff, parents and children with puppets (including those with moving difficulties) are joining at run/walk event for health; out-door sports campaigns could consider also cycling, climbing hiking, and winter sports like skating, sledding, snowshoeing etc. everyone can choose its own favorite sport activity and join no matter of background, communication possibilities etc.
- Ensuring student well-being in a digital world means that schools are increasingly expected to work in partnership with other actors, including parents and families, but also health professionals, psychologists and law enforcement. Increasingly, they also include digital experts, cyber security professionals and programmers. Developing and maintaining partnerships with such a diverse set of actors, some of whom (for example those from the private sector) have different aims and goals, is a complex challenge.

