Parent'r'us

School parent involvement to increase student achievement

IO7 – School Parent Engagement

Awareness Raising Toolkit

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

This publication contains a series of tools aiming at various education stakeholders that can be used as a package or independently, depending on local awareness raising needs. This publication rounds up the Parent'R'Us project, and its role is to ensure the sustainability and mainstreaming of project results. The purpose of Intellectual Output 7 (IO7) is to offer a tool for schools, parent organisations and other NGOs wishing to implement the Parent'R'Us approach to raise the awareness of the most relevant stakeholder groups of parental engagement, its inclusion aspects and methodologies that support the engagement of disadvantaged, vulnerable parents in schools for the school success and well-being of their children.

The Toolkit is built on the previous publications of the project and on the one hand aims to promote the parent mentoring methodology developed, and on the other hand offers a possible solution for a crucial issue highlighted by research: the need for teacher mindsets and approaches to change. It offers a step-by-step process to promote parent engagement for school achievement and child well-being.

This publication contains five toolsets targeting the following audiences:

- o Policy makers
- o School heads
- o Teachers
- o Parents
- o Community/NGO stakeholders

2. About the PARENT'R'US project

The School Parent Involvement to Increase Student Achievement (PARENT'R'US) project is a 3-year project funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union established by a partnership of 8 non-profit organizations from across Europe. The PARENT'R'US project aims to use a holistic model/approach in order to connect family, school and community related factors. The main targets of the project are families and children in disadvantaged situations.

The project consortium developed a mentoring model targeting parents as mentors and mentees, and teachers and key-community educators as mentor managers.

Within the PARENT'R'US model there are three main roles:

- Mentor managers (who will mainly be teachers, social workers, psychologists, etc.);

- Mentors (who will be parents more involved in their children's academic achievement and well-being at school, key-community educators and other people of reference in the children's lives);

- Mentees (disadvantaged parents not or less involved in their children's academic achievement and well-being at school).

The partnership has delivered the activities foreseen based on the concept of mentoring as a development-oriented relationship between a less experienced individual (mentee) and a more experienced individual, the mentor. The unique, idiosyncratic relationship between mentor and mentee is based on an emotional bond, the mentor offers guidance and new learning opportunities to the mentee. At the same time, mentoring is also a learning journey for mentors who, in turn, gain new knowledge and competences while working with the mentees. A mentoring relationship is also a form of providing a safe environment for self-exploration, reflection, and self-expression to all the actors in the process.

The PARENT'R'US project goals are:

a. To develop innovative and multidisciplinary approaches to empower for parental engagement building on lessons learned from the MOMIE, MEGAN and MPATH projects in the field of mentoring and the Includ-ED, FamilyEduNet and ELICIT + projects in the field of parental engagement, student participation & their active citizenship aspects;

b. To identify a suitable profile and necessary competences for supporting parents or performing mentoring programs within schools, parent organisations and/or local NGOs;

c. To design a mentoring model for improving parenting skills, especially for parents less or not engaged in their children's school life;

d. To deliver an awareness raising toolkit for parents, schools, supervisory/financing organizations of schools and community organizations.

The PARENT'R'US project focuses on:

I.   Empowerment of disadvantaged parents, in order to facilitate parental engagement in their children's schooling.

II.   Scaffolding well-working relationships between families from disadvantaged backgrounds, school and other community stakeholders.

For this reason, as for intellectual outputs, PARENT'R'US has developed the following:

IO1.   Systematic evidence review on Mentoring Models to engage disadvantaged parents' in their children schooling

IO2.   Self-Assessment Tool for Mentor Managers

IO3.   Self-Assessment Tool for Mentors

IO4.   Mentoring for Parent Engagement: the course to train the Managers

IO5.   Mentoring for Parent Engagement: the course to train the Mentors

IO6.   Mentoring Model for parent engagement in children's schooling

IO7.   School Parent Engagement Awareness Raising Toolkit

The purpose of Intellectual Output 7 (IO7) is to offer a tool for schools, parent organisations and other NGOs wishing to implement the Parent'R'Us approach to raise the awareness of the most relevant stakeholder groups of parental engagement, its inclusion aspects and methodologies that support the engagement of disadvantaged, vulnerable parents in schools for the success and well-being of their children.

3. Research base for the Toolkit

According to research done at the beginning of the project, published in IO1, there is a need to work around the mindset and approaches of the schools that also need to change. This element is not addressed through other elements of the Parent'R'Us project outputs. This Toolkit aims to provide a solution to these issues raised by the research conducted within the project. It raises awareness, among other things, of the need to do further work and recommends the design of a mentoring and coaching model to improve teacher competences for parental engagement in children's school life. This has proven to be beyond the project's scope so far.

The Parent'R'Us research highlights that "a mentoring program is only going to be successful, **if the school does not expect the families to simply assimilate to the existing system, but they are willing to step out of their comfort zone and change, too.** The school needs to acknowledge that the practices they are used to might need to be refreshed, or in some cases completely reformed. What worked for previous generations or different students, may not work for the current classes. There are no solutions that fit everyone, the school needs to stay flexible at all times. The teachers and the school staff need mentoring and support in order to be prepared to handle parents as partners, and to be able to understand and work with the different families.

Schools also need to understand and acknowledge education done by the parents at home and also consider children's non-formal learning (e.g. participating at youth organizations or church activities). Parents mentored in the course of the project have to be supported to realize that they are doing a good job educating their children and that they are not required to focus on school work as it is not their job to cover for any lack of provision in formal education. Schools and teachers need to learn how they can rely and build on home education and adjust formal education to that.

The **school and mentors should actively reach out to parents and families labelled as 'hard-to-reach'** (or ones they have not yet found the way to reach (Goodall 2017)), and provide a welcoming space where former and existing bad experiences of parents can be changed for the better. It requires the school and teachers to have an ´outreach mentality´, they should not wait for the families to come to them, but explore the reasons why parents might avoid the school, and work on these issues. In order to find a way to ´hard-to-reach´ families, the school should be encouraged to use the help of already engaged parents, community leaders, social workers and other professionals."

4. Toolsets

The five toolsets below are designed to be used as individual, printable tools to support the implementation of the Parent'R'Us approach successfully.

Parent'R'Us Awareness Raising Tool for Policy makers

Key messages:

- Children from disadvantaged families are often at risk of school failure and the disengagement of their families in school life is a major factor in it;
- Policies supporting the engagement of all parents are directly impacting school success and children well-being at school;
- As a result, such policies are also taking burden off teachers and result in lower costs in the education system.

What is parental engagement at school?

To a certain extent parents are involved at school or at least they are supposed to be involved. Research around parental involvement and parental engagement defines these two notions differently, the first being an invitation for taking part in something that is already in place and the latter one being a co-creation procedure between partners – namely school and home – mutually recognizing each other's role and impact and working in partnership around learning. It is also clear from research that parental engagement has a number of benefits for children.

The difference between involving and engaging parents

Involvement	Engagement
Who is involved/engaged?	
Parents	Parents and children + family and community
What is in the focus?	
School with teaching in centre	School, parents, learner with learning in centre
How it is done	
School initiative, formal meetings	Flexibility of form and timing
Communication is	
One-way, school to home	Two-way, use of technology is dominant

Policies supporting parental engagement

Education policy can support parental engagement directly and indirectly in the following ways:

By establishing a policy environment that obliges schools to engage representatives of parents in decision making, giving parents' representation (parents' organisations or committees) specific rights and obligations;

- By empowering and supporting organisations of parents to ensure equitable participation of parents from diverse backgrounds and to avoid tokenism;
- By building parent representation in a bottom-up way and actively engaging parent representatives in decision making at local, regional and national level, in all questions related to education;
- By offering teacher and school leader training, coaching and mentoring in parental engagement, and incentivising their participation as part of the compulsory continuous professional development (CPD);
- By supporting the exchange of inspiring practices and engaging community organisations in parental engagement support.

Teacher professional development needs

Research clearly shows that in the majority of European countries the profile of teachers is closest to white, middle class, middle aged, female with a low level of diversity. Migrant and Roma communities are especially under-represented in the teaching professions while their children are the most vulnerable and at risk of school failure. Motivation research also shows that those choosing teaching as a profession are relatively risk-averse and opt for the school as a workplace being closest to values, behaviours and practices they consider their own. However, parent engagement is only possible if it is based on mutual respect and equal partnerships. Thus, teacher training needs to accompany administrative measures that focus on:

- Widening teachers' knowledge and understanding of diverse social and ethnic groups;
- Identifying and overcoming prejudices;
- Offering tools for partnership with people whose social and cultural background differ from those of the teachers' in general;
- Specific needs of vulnerable families.

When designing policies that are especially supportive of the engagement of vulnerable, disadvantaged parents, the following factors are to be considered:

- A high percentage of these parents have bad schooling experiences that have a direct impact on their attitude towards teachers and schools;
- Many of these parents don't feel comfortable in the school as a physical space, thus policy needs to encourage school-related discourse to happen at safe third places (with the possible engagement of community organisations);
- A high percentage of these families need information as well as active support during engagement opportunities in languages other than the language of instruction.

Benefits of offering policy support to the Parent'R'Us mentoring approach

Supporting vulnerable families is only successful if it is built on trust. At the same time, it is also important to boost the self-esteem of vulnerable parents and help them become conscious, equal partners at school. The Parent'R'Us mentoring model is an exceptionally good tool for achieving this, while it can also be a successful and affordable policy tool. By training teachers and community organisation representatives to act as mentor managers, and subsequently trainers of parent mentors, the approach provides a low-cost, but very effective approach to renewing a mentor pool of upcoming generations of parents.

The Parent'R'Us mentoring model foresees peer mentoring from parent to parent that supports an equitable parent engagement policy in two ways. On the one hand, mentors – who are parents coming from the same disadvantaged background as mentees – are acknowledged and rewarded as successful role models for their community when they choose to become mentors. On the other hand, mentees see a role model in the mentor parent who is very similar to them, offering them an easy role model to follow. As vulnerable parents often do not trust authority, including teachers for various reasons, this approach is especially suitable for reaching out and engaging them by building back trust via a peer they trust and can easily identify with.

Parent'R'Us Awareness Raising Tool for School heads

Key messages:

- You as a school leader need to make it clear that you want to build a partnership between your school and ALL parents, and build parent representation accordingly, with a special focus on cultural and social differences.
- You need to support the teachers in initiating and maintaining partnerships. They are the professionals, you should not expect the initiative from the parents.
- Use all available means to support disadvantaged, vulnerable parents so that they can feel safe and treated as equal partners.

What do we mean by parental engagement at school?

To a certain extent parents are involved at school or at least they are supposed to be involved. Research around parental involvement and parental engagement defines these two notions differently, the first being an invitation for taking part in something that is already in place and the latter one being a co-creation procedure between partners – namely school and home – mutually recognizing each other's role and impact and working in partnership around learning. It is also clear from research that parental engagement has a number of benefits for children.

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Specific needs of vulnerable families

When you design your own school's engagement policy, and you aim for engaging all parents, regardless of their background or social status, you need to consider the following about disadvantaged, vulnerable families:

- A high percentage of these parents have bad schooling experiences that have a direct impact on their attitude towards teachers and schools;
- Many of these parents don't feel comfortable in the school as a physical space, thus policy needs to encourage school-related discourse to happen at safe third places (with the possible engagement of community organisations);
- A high percentage of these families need information as well as active support during engagement opportunities in languages other than the language of instruction;
- Even if the language they feel comfortable speaking is the language of instruction, their linguistic register may be different from that of the teachers, and they may not understand education jargon.

How can school leaders encourage a partnership approach to parent-teacher relations?

As a school leader, you first need to make it clear for your staff that you want to establish an equal partnership with parents taking into consideration their background regardless of how different that is from yours or others', and that you want them to do so themselves.

You need to revisit and rethink the time and space usually used for interacting with parents and redesign it if necessary. A parent room available for confidential discussion is a good first step if you don't yet have one, but you can consider using safe third spaces (not the school and not the home) for interaction.

The way to engaging vulnerable parents is usually through people they know and trust, so ensure that vulnerable parents are represented in your school's parent body/committee/organisation, and rely on them when designing the engagement of other similar parents.

Celebrate all successes that vulnerable families share with the school or that their children achieve at school.

Teacher training and coaching needs

Research conducted in the Parent'R'Us project as well as long-term experience of partners working in the field show that first and foremost teachers need to identify their pre-conceptions about disadvantaged parents who usually differ from them greatly in many ways. This can then be the basis for changing mindsets, overcoming prejudices and becoming open to differences. If you want to establish a parental engagement culture in your school, your teachers need help achieving mutual trust and appreciation. It needs to be initiated by the teachers as professionals.

Research clearly shows that in the majority of European countries the profile of teachers is closest to white, middle class, middle aged, female with a low level of diversity. Migrant and Roma communities are especially under-represented in the teaching professions while their children are the most vulnerable and at risk of school failure. Motivation research also shows that those choosing teaching as a profession are relatively risk-averse and opt for the school as a workplace being closest to values, behaviours and practices they consider their own. However, parent engagement is only possible if it is based on mutual respect and equal partnerships. Thus, teacher training needs to accompany administrative measures that focus on:

- Widening teachers' knowledge and understanding of diverse social and ethnic groups;
- Identifying and overcoming prejudices;
- Offering tools for partnership with people different from teachers in general;
- Specific needs of vulnerable families.

Benefits of implementing the Parent'R'Us mentoring approach at your school

Supporting vulnerable families is only successful if it is built on trust. At the same time, it is also important to boost the self-esteem of vulnerable parents and help them become conscious, equal partners at school. The Parent'R'Us mentoring model is an exceptionally good tool for achieving this, while it can be a successful and affordable policy tool. By training your teachers and involving community organisation representatives to act as mentor managers, and subsequently trainers of parent mentors, the approach provides a very effective approach to renewing a mentor pool of upcoming generations of parents.

The Parent'R'Us mentoring model foresees peer mentoring from parent to parent that supports an equitable parent engagement policy in two ways. On the one hand, mentors – who are parents coming from the same disadvantaged background as mentees – are acknowledged and rewarded as

successful role models for their community when they choose to become mentors. On the other hand, mentees see a role model in the mentor parent who is very similar to them, offering them an easy role model to follow. As vulnerable parents often do not trust authority, including teachers for various reasons, this approach is especially suitable for reaching out and engaging them by building back trust via a peer they can trust and easily identify with.

Your mentor parents can also act as mentors, coaches and trainers for your teachers to help appreciate disadvantaged parents and to build partnerships with them. They can be the bridge, especially when there are major cultural differences between your teachers and parents.

Parent'R'Us Awareness Raising Tool for Teachers

Key messages:

- All parents can support the learning of their children, but some may not be able to support their schoolwork.
- Building equal partnerships with parents is a step towards real inclusion in education.
- You need to know the parents of your children and be open to them to build partnerships. You can best rely on them for support, but you can also seek support from your colleagues or school leader.

The role of parents in educating their children and their relation to school

Parents are the primary educators of their children. This not only means that they are the first educators, but research also shows that they have the largest impact on the learning – including school learning – of their children. This primary role is present until the age of 11-12 when it is overtaken by the peer group. Contrary to common belief, it is never the teacher who has the largest impact.

At the same time, parents are also responsible for the education of their children, and the school's role is a supporting one. Most parents want the school to help with some of their educator duties, mostly those they are not capable of doing. In the case of disadvantaged parents this is even more dominantly the case. For school success, you need to do two things: help parents celebrate school success, and abandon all practices, e.g. homework that require the active support of parents. In order to really support disadvantaged children for school success, you should support a different kind of learning at home. You may want to promote discussion around the dinner table or encourage parents to read for pleasure to be role models for their children. Surprisingly enough, these activities are two of the very few that have a proven positive effect on school success. Some disadvantaged parents need to be reminded that they have done a terrific job educating their children already to boost their self-esteem.

Benefits and challenges of engaging with parents as partners in your work

Your school head may have already asked you to revisit your communication with parents and to build an equal partnership. In the Parent'R'Us approach we promote parental engagement as compared to involvement. You will want to engage parents in both the learning of their children and school life. When promoting engagement, you need to be conscious of the difference between celebrating learning and having to sit down with children to study. For equity and inclusion you should encourage the first and forget the second.

This simple chart will help you design engaging with parents of your students:

Involvement	Engagement
Who is involved/engaged?	
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Understanding your own mindset about parents, especially vulnerable parents

Research conducted in the Parent'R'Us project as well as long-term experience of partners working in the field show that first and foremost teachers need to identify their pre-conceptions about disadvantaged parents who usually differ from them greatly in many ways. This can then be the basis for changing mindsets, overcoming prejudices and becoming open to differences. If you want to establish a parental engagement culture in your school, you need help achieving mutual trust and appreciation. It needs to be initiated by the teachers as professionals.

Research clearly shows that in the majority of European countries the profile of teachers is closest to white, middle class, middle aged, female with a low level of diversity. Migrant and Roma communities are especially under-represented in the teaching professions while their children are the most vulnerable and at risk of school failure. Thus, it is very likely that you or at least many of your colleagues fall into the majority category. Motivation research also shows that those choosing teaching as a profession are relatively risk-averse and opt for the school as a workplace being closest to values, behaviours and practices they consider their own. However, parent engagement is only possible if it is based on mutual respect and equal partnerships. Thus, teacher training needs to accompany administrative measures that focus on:

- Widening teachers' knowledge and understanding of diverse social and ethnic groups;
- Identifying and overcoming prejudices;
- Offering tools for partnership with people different from teachers in general.

Specific needs of vulnerable families

Parents' engagement has a proven direct positive impact on school success as well as the well-being of children at school. However, you need to consider the following:

- A high percentage of these parents have bad schooling experiences that have a direct impact on their attitude towards teachers and schools.
- Many of these parents don't feel comfortable in the school as a physical space, thus policy needs to encourage school-related discourse to happen at safe third places (with the possible engagement of community organisations).
- A high percentage of these families need information as well as active support during engagement opportunities in languages other than the language of instruction.
- Even if the language they feel comfortable speaking is the language of instruction, their linguistic register may be different from that of the teachers, and they may not understand education jargon.

Engaging with vulnerable, "problematic" parents as equal partners

Establishing an equal partnership with all parents is only possible if you understand both them and yourself, especially any factors in your mindset or knowledge that may hinder your professional, proactive approach.

"Hard-to-reach parents" is a commonly used notion, but we encourage you to rather think about parents you haven't yet managed to engage. You are the professional, and you need to take the initiative, but do so taking cultural and linguistic differences into account. You also need to understand that some parents appear to be problematic because their trust in school is low due to bad personal experiences. Some parents may find the school, the most familiar environment for you, frightening, and you can only build partnerships if you leave your physical comfort zone. You may need to rethink the timing of meeting parents, but you also need to consider yourself when

adjusting meeting times. Technology can help, but you need to set the rules for using it together, for example agreeing on when somebody can call you or expect a reply.

Benefits of PRUS mentoring for parents

Supporting vulnerable families is only successful if it is built on trust. At the same time, it is also important to boost the self-esteem of vulnerable parents and help them become conscious, equal partners at school. The Parent'R'Us mentoring model is an exceptionally good tool for achieving this, while it can be a successful and affordable policy tool. By training you or your colleagues or involving community organisation representatives to act as mentor managers, and subsequently trainers of parent mentors, the approach provides a very effective approach to renewing a mentor pool of upcoming generations of parents.

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Your mentor parents can also act as mentors, coaches and trainers for you and help appreciate disadvantaged parents and to build partnerships with them. They can be the bridge, especially when there are major cultural differences between you and the parents.

Parent'R'Us Awareness Raising Tool for Parents

<u>The role of parents in educating their children and their relation to school</u>

Parents are the primary educators of their children. This not only means that you are the first educators, but research also shows that parents have the largest impact on the learning – including school learning – of their children. And your impact on learning does not depend on your ability to help with schoolwork or homework. All you need to do is celebrate every bit of school success, and encourage them to try harder if they are not so successful. This primary role is present until the age of 11-12 when it is overtaken by the peer group. Contrary to common belief, it is never the teacher who has the largest impact.

You have to make sure your child goes to school regularly. At the same time, you have to find out the reason if he/she doesn't want to go, and reach out to the teacher if you think there is a problem at school.

You need to ask them regularly if they are ready with their homework, but you shouldn't check it regularly. If your child struggles with the homework, you should remind the teacher that it is not your job to help with homework, and they should set tasks your child can do on his/her own.

Take some time to understand that you have taught a lot of things to your child. They can walk and talk, they have learnt to tie shoelaces, to dress, sing, play, cook, bake, plant vegetables, clean the room, wash up – the list is endless.

You can do two things that have a proven positive effect on their school success, and neither of them are related to schoolwork.

- Try to establish a routine of having a meal together every day, and discuss everyday topics with your child.
- Sit down and read for your own pleasure or to your child, because reading as an example will make them readers.

<u>The role of teachers and your relationship with them as equal partners</u>

Parents are also responsible for the education of their children, and the school's role is a supporting one. Most parents want the school to help with some of their educator duties, mostly those they are not capable of doing.

Parents and teachers are educating children together. You are an equal partner regardless of your position in the local community. You know your own child and his/her needs best, while the teacher has the professional knowledge and knows how to teach school subjects. Teachers as professional educators should be able to help you as an educator if you have doubts or questions. However, you may feel more comfortable discussing such topics in the presence of other parents.

<u>What you can expect in a school implementing the Parent'R'Us model</u>

Once a school has subscribed to the Parent'R'Us model, you can expect:

- Teachers to consider all parents as equal partners;
- Teachers actively reaching out to all parents and finding the best way to engage you in the learning of your child, but also school life;
- The school to invite you to mentor other parents or the teachers;
- The school to offer you mentoring if you need help;

- To have school practices that consider the difference between education by parents and by the school, for example little or no homework.

<u>You and other parents</u>

It doesn't matter what you do for a living, what schools you went to, what languages you speak, what you believe in, whether you are married or not, what the colour of your skin is… in the school you are one of the parents. You are equal, and you shouldn't be shy to demand equal treatment. You have to understand that for each parent it is their own child or children who are the most important. Your child may have special needs, but the same is true for other children.

You may feel more comfortable at the school than other parents. In this case, find a way to support those who are less confident.

You may feel uncomfortable at school or speaking to teachers. In this case, reach out to other parents, and find one you can trust and feel comfortable with.

<u>Benefits of participating in Parent'R'Us as a mentor or mentee</u>

If you are one of the more confident parents, and you have a little time, you may want to consider becoming a Parent'R'Us mentor. You will surely learn a lot about yourself and about other parents.

If you don't feel comfortable at school, try to ask the school or your community for a Parent'R'Us mentor. They are also parents, they are very similar to you, they have the same problems, but they are a little more comfortable around teachers. They can help you.

Parent'R'Us Awareness Raising Tool for Community/NGO stakeholders

Key messages:

- Community organisations play an important role as mediators between schools and disadvantaged parents.
- For this work to be successful, community organisations and NGOs need to understand the roles and duties of both schools and parents.

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NGOs and community actors as facilitators on parent-teacher partnerships

First and foremost, community organisations and NGOs can offer safe third physical spaces where teachers and parents can meet and build their partnership.

You might be more familiar with the culture, language, practices and traditions of disadvantaged families in your community, and thus you can play a role in making teachers understand these communities. In some cases community actors can also act as 'interpreters'. Even if parents and teachers speak the same language, they may have differing vocabularies, and teachers often use professional jargon.

As a community organisation parents trust, you can actively reach out to disadvantaged, vulnerable parents and offer them your support as well as peer mentoring using the Parent'R'Us mentoring model.

Facilitating and supporting the engagement of vulnerable, "problematic" parents as equal partners

You can be the bridge between parents and schools. For this, you may want to:

- Support teachers in understanding their own limits, and help them in their professional development;
- Support parents by offering them answers to challenges they face at school.

The Parent'R'Us model is a perfect tool for this, so you may want to consider training your colleagues to become mentor managers, as well as actively reach out to parents and encourage them to become mentors and help others.

Benefits of PRUS mentoring for parents accompanied by mindset and practice changing measures targeting teachers

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Your mentor parents can also act as mentors, coaches and trainers for teachers, but also for your own staff to help appreciate disadvantaged parents and to build partnerships with them. They can be the bridge, especially when there are major cultural differences between teachers and parents.

Providing a safe, neutral space for parent-teacher partnerships

The local school may reach out to you and ask for your help, but you can also be proactive in building relationships if you feel that vulnerable parents in your community cannot find the way to collaborate with the school.

Many of these parents have bad experiences with their own schooling, and don't feel comfortable in the school as a physical space. Your community space can be an alternative.

Many of these parents work unusual hours and are not available at the 'usual' times for parent-teachers discussions. You may offer an alternative time.

Many of these parents don't speak the language of instruction. You may provide a space that offers interpretation.

Many teachers feel uncomfortable having to learn from parents with a much lower socio-economic status. You may offer training, coaching and co-mentoring with parent mentors in your own venue for a more relaxed professional development.

You may offer child care that disadvantaged parents cannot afford or organise to make the dialogue between parents and teachers possible.

Practical examples and tools

Literacy

1. Parent engagement needs assessment for literacy activities

    As reading-related activities have been identified as beneficial for enhancing school success, this tool can be useful for the school, but also for parent organisations and parent mentors for helping disadvantaged parents in this field.

    https://library.parenthelp.eu/getting-to-know-the-family-guiding-questions-for-professionals/

2. The "Learning together project":

    This is an innovative program within which the traditional roles of families, teachers and students are reconstructed in relation to children and their learning. The social landscape is one of significant inequity. The program is unique in that it focuses on both children and adults, and often in combination. Parents/carers (as young as 14 years of age) and their young children are brought together to learn within the same space simultaneously. Teachers act as learning facilitators, providing for the individual needs of program participants. Curriculum is crafted around involving parents in their children's learning. Adult (parent) learning is interest-driven, relevant to both their own and their children's development. Furthermore, the curriculum is aligned with the formal state-based senior secondary curriculum to enable parents to complete their secondary schooling certificate.

    https://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/49746097.pdf

3. Let´s read them a Story!

    This report seeks to determine whether and how parents' involvement is related to their child's proficiency in and enjoyment of reading. *Let's Read Them a Story!* Offers parents, educators and policy makers practical suggestions on how to improve parental involvement and describes the kinds of activities that are most strongly associated with better reading performance.
    It provides a wealth of examples of programmes that promote effective forms of parental involvement from around the world.

    https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/Parent%20Factor_e-book-new%20logo_FINAL_new%20page%2047.pdf

4. The Bellevue Project for Early Language, Literacy, and Education Success "

   Primary Care Strategies for Promoting Parent-Child Interactions and School Readiness in At-Risk Families. Project implemented in a NY hospital with families with a low socioeconomic status.

   https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/article-abstract/384150

Digital skills

5. Digital citizenship guide for parents

   Active digital citizenship has become part of everyday life, and even more so since school closures started in 2020. This publication, addressed to parents, is to help them navigate being online together with their children, understanding and protecting rights online (and offline) and well-being online (and offline). It can be useful for mentors.

   https://library.parenthelp.eu/parents-as-digital-citizenship-educators-new-council-of-europe-publication/

6. Helping families engage in their children's learning

   This practical guide contains ideas for professionals, parent leaders and mentors if they want to offer help directly related to the learning of children, including school learning.

   https://library.parenthelp.eu/helping-families-engage-in-their-childrens-learning/

7. The SUSD website (Stockton Unified School District) has a lot of resources to families and students in English and Spanish. One useful resource is a guide for parents, the "Technology Resource Guide" with tutorials about how to use the main digital tools.

   SUSD Website:

   https://www.stocktonusd.net/domain/168

   "Technology Resource Guide":

   https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gcfw1-th3erYzkhvcYlT3VFGwgvB0xyKOG3ZhMun-sk/edit

Cultural Diversity

8. Dealing with controversial issues

   Vulnerable parents are often minority parents, thus there are a number of controversial issues that may be raised by other parents, teachers or even the children. This guide, developed by the Council of Europe, offers practical ideas for dealing with them and finding solutions together.

   https://library.parenthelp.eu/managing-controversy-a-whole-school-training-tool-by-the-council-of-europe/

9. Cultural Awareness and Expression Handbook

   When working with teachers and trying to help them change their mindsets and approach, it is important to support them in boosting their cultural awareness and understanding different cultures. This handbook can be a useful tool in the mentoring and coaching of teachers.

   https://library.parenthelp.eu/cultural-awareness-expression-handbook/

10. "Diversity and inclusion toolkit"

    This Toolkit reflects a blend of different ethnic groups, cultures, languages and family traditions that shows that the communities are changing and will continue to evolve. Designed to promote parental involvement with diverse populations in the schools engaging all families and communities. It could be useful for schools with cultural diversity, to implement before the project.

    https://www.pta.org/docs/default-source/uploadedfiles/2016-diversity-toolkit

11. "Guidelines for inclusion and diversity and schools"

    These guidelines aim to provide policy makers and head teachers with a practical framework and examples of best practice to assist them in meeting the challenges of inclusion and diversity in education. Specifically the guidelines make suggestions as to how schools can:

    – Raise achievement of all learners

    – Respect and celebrate diversity

    – Promote learner voice

– Incorporate best practices into their processes of improvement and self-evaluation so as to make these practices sustainable in the longer term.

https://www.britishcouncil.es/sites/default/files/british-council-guidelines-for-inclusion-and-diversity-in-schools.pdf

Social skills/ transversal key competences

12. Tools to boost parent-teacher communication

This collection contains a few practical ideas about enhancing communication between parents and teachers. It could be helpful for the mentors when they work with either parents or teachers.

https://library.parenthelp.eu/tools-boost-parent-teacher-communication/

13. Guide to running elections at school

One element of parental engagement of disadvantaged parents is ensuring their participation in school life and school decision making. This guide helps schools and school parent representations to organise elections in a way that give equal chances to these parents to have a representative.

https://library.parenthelp.eu/a-z-guide/

14. Website from the Australian government education department

In this website you can find different strategies for schools and families regarding different topics/interests: how to cooperate between families, how to be engaged with the children learning as a family and different strategies to develop and implement as a school to improve the communication between school and parents, and a series of printable documents very useful with tips and recommendations. They also have a course for teachers about parent engagement and a strategic plan to improve parent engagement in learning.

https://www.education.sa.gov.au/

https://www.education.sa.gov.au/parents-and-families/parent-engagement

https://www.education.sa.gov.au/schools-and-educators/strategies-and-initiatives

15. "Strength-based approach": A guide to writing Transition Learning and Development Statements

The purpose of this guide is to deepen educators' understanding of, and to dispel misconceptions about, the strength-based approach to writing Transition Learning and Development Statements. In doing so, it provides:

- Further information on the strength-based approach: what it is, what it isn't practices that support the strength-based approach;
- Suggested inclusions and considerations when framing the learning and development message;
- Practical examples of Statements written using a strength-based approach.

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/documents/childhood/professionals/learning/strengthbappr.pdf

16. Motivational interviewing

Motivational interviewing is a counselling method that helps people resolve ambivalent feelings and insecurities to find the internal motivation they need to change their behaviour. It is a practical, empathetic, and short-term process that takes into consideration how difficult it is to make life changes. Is a model based on cognitive-behavioural strategies. It is based on respect for the beliefs and values of the people interviewed; resulting in a non-directive tool, focused on the person's point of view and that allows them to freely choose if they want to change.

This practice could be a good start to increase the motivation of the participants before the Parent´ R´ Us program.

https://motivationalinterviewing.org/understanding-motivational-interviewing

17. "Coffee talks "

Materials/programs used to carry out coffee talks in schools, mainly for families but also for students, teachers and staff. This kind of activities help schools to build better relationships with the families, and can be a good start before the Parent´R´Us, and it can be used to inform them about the several competences that are in the trainings, and they can also be a good opportunity to find volunteers as mentors and mentees.

https://pvhs.palmbeachschools.org/students_parents/counseling_department/coffe_talks

https://www.ludlow.kyschools.us/userfiles/28/my%20files/parent%20coffee%20talks.pdf?id=11294

18. "Action Sheet to promote resilience"

This action sheet offers strategies that may assist in engaging families in developing social connections. It could be useful especially for mentors to support mentees.

http://socialserviceworkforce.org/resources/parental-resilience-protective-and-promotive-factors-action-sheet#:~:text=Factors%20Action%20Sheet-,Parental%20Resilience%3A%20Protective%20and%20Promotive%20Factors%20Action%20Sheet,secure%20attachments%20in%20young%20children.

19. "Waterford.org"

Waterford.org is a national education non-profit dedicated to providing high-quality educational resources for children, families, communities, and partners to deliver excellence and equity for all learners. Their mission is achieved and supported by three pillars: Equity and Access, Family Empowerment, and Universal Literacy. This organization offers a lot of information and resources for schools and families.

https://www.waterford.org/

Examples:

- "3 KEYS to a Meaningful Family Partnership Model"

This document informs the importance of having meaningful relationships between family and schools and gives us various tips to achieve them.

https://owncloud.waterford.org/index.php/s/hLp1dA4RuHYVoFy?_ga=2.55316781.749590235.1619609438-944384103.1619609438

- How to Increase Parental Involvement with Connection.

https://www.waterford.org/education/increase-parental-involvement-with-connection/

20. Internet of Good Things (IoGT)

A mobile-packaged content designed to make life-saving and life-improving information available for free, even on low-end devices. IoGT is helping communities and frontline workers access educational and lifesaving information at the point of care. Topics and issues include maternal health, hygiene, emergency information on diseases, sexual health advice for adolescents, Internet safety, positive parenting techniques and more. Including multimedia elements and 2-way communication features, the IoGT platform

can also be used to capture feedback and local best practices from communities through polls and survey functionalities.

https://www.unicef.org/innovation/IoGT

Study cases/other experiences

21. "Reporting Educators' Experiences Regarding Family–School Interactions With Implications for Best Practices"

    Thematic analysis of 44 empirical articles published from 2007 to 2017 that explored preservice and in-service teachers' experiences regarding family–school–community interactions. This study includes some Educational Strategies that have had impact on the relationships between schools and families.

    https://www.adi.org/journal/2019fw/KirmaciFW2019.pdf

22. Survey/research asked by The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned BMRB Social Research (Norway) to investigate the level of involvement parents have in their children's education and general school life (primary or secondary school age) attending state schools.

    https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/4669/1/RR332.pdf

23. "Relationships Between School and Family: The Adolescents' Perspective"

    The study describes, conceptualizes and tries to explain the present status of the school–family relationships from the adolescents' perspective. The Case Study in the County of Alba Project is in the process of development. The purpose was to find out what perceptions, representations and behavioural patterns the adolescents have towards their parents' involvement in education and towards the relationships between school and family, in the political and socio-economical context of Romania during the transition period to a democratic society.

    https://www.researchgate.net/publication/47561552_Relationships_between_School_and_Family_The_Adolescents'_Perspective

24. "The Safe Space"

The Safe Space is home to resources and tools to provide you with some extra support in an emotionally safe environment. It could be useful for coordinators, mentors and mentees to use as a tool to calm down and deal with the stress.

https://www.vibrant.org/safespace/?_ga=2.142472374.545837032.1619692184-1006219067.1619692184

25. "Parenting Tip Sheets"

Open-source and evidence-based parenting tips and resources available in more than 100 languages. It could be useful for coordinators, mentors and mentees.

https://www.covid19parenting.com/tips

Questionnaires/checklist/surveys

26. Parent involvement checklist (based on Joyce Epstein's Partnership School Approach)

This practical tool has been used at schools to evaluate their approach and existing solutions for partnership with parents. It is useful for developing school-level solutions for better relationships.

https://library.parenthelp.eu/questionnaire-assess-parental-engagement-level-schools/

27. Questionnaires and scales that can be useful to have a general idea about the relationship between different statements: school, family, and teachers.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL AND AT HOME.
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FAMILY[1]

M.ª Pilar Muñoz López y M.ª Ángeles Hernández Prados
University of Murcia

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information about your relationship with your child's school. We kindly ask you to answer all the questions posed honestly, bearing in mind that confidentiality is assured. If you have several children enrolled in the center, answer considering the child who gave it to you. Please return the questionnaire to your child's tutor within one week after completing the questionnaire.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Please tick the option or options that match your personal situation.

1. Who answers the questionnaire? ☐ Father ☐ Mother ☐ Both ☐ Others

2. Indicate the type of family:

    ☐ Father, mother and sons   ☐ Single parent family (father/mother alone with his children)

    ☐ Reconstituted family (father/mother, couple with sons)   ☐ Other options: _____

3. Age of father and mother:

Progenitor	Less than 20	From 20 to 30	From 31 to 40	From 41 to 50	More than 51
Father	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mother	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. Indicate your country of birth:

Progenitor	Yes	No	Country of birth
Father	☐	☐	
Mother	☐	☐	

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[1] Questionnaire adapted from Hernández, M.A., Gomariz, M.A., Parra, J. and García, 2017. Assessment of the involvement of families in the education of their children. Questionnaire for families.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL AND AT HOME.
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS[1]

M.ª Pilar Muñoz López y M.ª Ángeles Hernández Prados
University of Murcia

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC QUESTION

> The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information about their teaching practice with regard to the participation of parents in the educational process of their children, especially regarding and their relationship with the school. Your answers are very important, as they can help improve the overall development of children. We ask you to answer honestly to all the questions raised, bearing in mind that confidentiality is assured.

Please tick the option or options that match your personal situation.

1. **Gender:** ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. **Age:** ☐ From 20 to 30 ☐ From 31 to 40 ☐ From 41 to 50 ☐ From 51 to 60 ☐ More than 60

3. **Years of teaching experience:** ☐ Less than 5 ☐ From 5 to 10 ☐ From 11 to 20 ☐ From 21 to 30 ☐ More than 30

4. **Employment situation:** ☐ Temporary contract ☐ Indefinite contract

5. **Teaching experience at the center (in years):** ☐ Less than 5 ☐ From 5 to 10 ☐ From 11 to 20 ☐ From 21 to 30 ☐ More than 30

6. **Courses in which he teaches:**

   Children Education: ☐ First Year ☐ Second Year ☐ Third Year

   Primary Education: ☐ First Year ☐ Second Year ☐ Third Year ☐ Fourth Year ☐ Fifth Year ☐ Sixth Year

7. **Specialty that teaches:** ☐ Children Education ☐ Primary Education ☐ Foreign language ☐ Physical Education ☐ Music Education ☐ Therapeutic Pedagogy ☐ Hearing and language ☐ Others: _____

8. **Position that occupies in the center:**

   ☐ neither ☐ Form teacher ☐ Coordinator ☐ Management Team ☐ Head Teacher

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[1] Questionnaire adapted from Hernández, M.A., Gomariz, M.A., Parra, J. and García, 2017. Assessment of the involvement of families in the education of their children. Questionnaire for teachers.

Parenting Sense of Competence Scale

(Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978)

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

1. The problems of taking care of a child are easy to solve once you know how your actions affect your child, an understanding I have acquired. 1 2 3 4 5 6

2. Even though being a parent could be rewarding, I am frustrated now while my child is at his / her present age. 1 2 3 4 5 6

3. I go to bed the same way I wake up in the morning, feeling I have not accomplished a whole lot. 1 2 3 4 5 6

4. I do not know why it is, but sometimes when I'm supposed to be in control, I feel more like the one being manipulated. 1 2 3 4 5 6

5. My mother was better prepared to be a good mother than I am. 1 2 3 4 5 6

6. I would make a fine model for a new mother to follow in order to learn what she would need to know in order to be a good parent. 1 2 3 4 5 6

7. Being a parent is manageable, and any problems are easily solved. 1 2 3 4 5 6

8. A difficult problem in being a parent is not knowing whether you're doing a good job or a bad one. 1 2 3 4 5 6

9. Sometimes I feel like I'm not getting anything done. 1 2 3 4 5

10. I meet by own personal expectations for expertise in caring for my child. 1 2 3 4 5 6

11. If anyone can find the answer to what is troubling my child, I am the one. 1 2 3 4 5 6

12. My talents and interests are in other areas, not being a parent. 1 2 3 4 5 6

13. Considering how long I've been a mother, I feel thoroughly familiar with this role. 1 2 3 4 5 6

14. If being a mother of a child were only more interesting, I would be motivated to do a better job as a parent. 1 2 3 4 5 6

15. I honestly believe I have all the skills necessary to be a good mother to my child. 1 2 3 4 5 6

16. Being a parent makes me tense and anxious. 1 2 3 4 5 6

17. Being a good mother is a reward in itself. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Parenting Scale

Time **1** CID ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Mom ○ Dad/Other ○
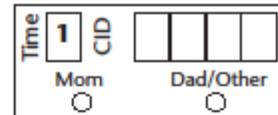
At one time or another, all children misbehave or do things that could be harmful, are "wrong," or that parents don't like. Examples include: hitting someone, forgetting homework, having a tantrum, whining, throwing food, lying, arguing back, not picking up things, refusing to go to bed, coming home late. Parents have many different ways or styles of dealing with these types of problems. Below are items that describe some styles of parenting.

For each item, fill in the bubble that best describes your style of parenting during the **PAST TWO MONTHS** with the child with you here today.

Ex.	At meal time... *I let my child decide how I decide how much to eat*	○ ○ ● ○ ○ ○ ○	*I decide how much my child eats*

IN THE PAST TWO MONTHS

1. When my child misbehaves... *I do something right away*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	*I do something later*
2. Before I do something about a problem... *I give my child several reminders and warnings*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	*I use only one reminder or warning*
3. When I'm upset or under stress... *I am picky and on my child's back*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	*I am not more picky than usual*
4. When I tell my child NOT to do something... *I say very little*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	*I say a lot*
5. When my child pesters me... *I can ignore the pestering*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	*I can't ignore the pestering*
6. When my child misbehaves... *I usually get into a long argument with my child*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	*I don't get into an argument*
7. I threaten to do things that... *I'm sure I can carry out*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	*I know I won't actually do*
8. I am the kind of parent that... *Sets limits on what my child is allowed to do*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	*Lets my child do whatever he/ she wants*
9. When my child misbehaves... *I give my child a long lecture*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	*I keep my talks short and to the point*
10. When my child misbehaves... *I raise my voice or yell*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	*I speak to my child calmly*
11. If saying no doesn't work right away... *I take some other kind of action*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	*I keep talking and try to get through to my child*
12. When I want my child to stop doing something... *I firmly tell my child to stop*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	*I coax or beg my child to stop*
13. When my child is out of sight... *I often don't know what my child is doing*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	*I always have a good idea of what my child is doing*