



New Educational Training to WORK with parents

A training

for teachers and educational figures

about the relationship and communication

with parents

Nevertheless, no school can work well for children if parents and teachers do not act in partnership on behalf of the children's best interests. Parents have every right to understand what is happening to their children at school, and teachers have the responsibility to share that information without prejudicial judgment.... Such communication, which can only be in a child's interest, is not possible without mutual trust between parent and teacher (Dorothy H. Cohen)



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THE PROJECT

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Introduction

THE PROJECT

N.E.T.WORK is a project approved by European National Agencies of Lifelong Learning Programme in Grundtvig Programme.

N.E.T.WORK is the results of two years, from 2012 to 2014, of work between four different Countries (Italy, Spain, Poland, Sweden).

N.E.T.WORK, stands for New Educational Training to work with families: the goal of the project was to create a **training for educational figures, about the relationship and communication with families.**

The result, the training, is dedicated to educational figures, such as social workers, teachers, educators, specialist figures, working with families.

The training wants to improve these figures' knowledge, abilities, strategies and methodologies in communication thanks to an active learning and approach.

The European Partnership

The project involves four organizations, active in the field of Education.

| NAME OF INSTITUTION | CONTACT DATES | PARTICIPANTS |
|--|---|--|
| L'Arcobaleno Servizi (Social Cooperative Progetto Crescere) | Via Kennedy, 17, 42124, Reggio Emilia, ITALY Phone: 00390522934524 Fax: 00390522306788 Email: euprojects@progettocrescere.re.it | Patrizia Fantuzzi (Coordinator) Annamaria Agosti Maria Teresa Faccin Graziana Porro Lisa Vescogni |
| Equipo de Orientacion Educativa y Psicopedagógica de Molina de Segura (EOEP) | C/Joaquin Abellán, s/n Centro El Jardin, Molina de Segura , Murcia 30500 SPAIN Phone: 0034968641669 Email: eoepmolina@regmurcia.com | Maria Resurrecion García López (Coordinator) Maria del Mar Leal Baeza Josefa Pilar Miranda López Maria Eusebia Flores Baeza Francisca Capel Torres Margarita Alba Gamez Raul Vicente Salar Trinidad Serrano Moreno Juana Guillen Caballero |
| Sundsvalls kommun CFK-Stöd- och utvecklingsteamet förskola | Barn- och utbildning Selångergården, 85185, Sundsvall, SWEDEN ulla.jacobsson-hemgren@skola.sundsvall.se | Ulla Jakobsson Hemgren (Coordinator) Anna-Lisa Wikström Katarina Nygren Anna Maria Henriksson Elisabeth Hellström Helena Martinsson Anette Sandström |
| Ośrodek Edukacyjny Taurus S.C. | Ul. T. Kościuszki 41 m 3 05-825 Grodzisk Mazowiecki POLAND wychowanie@wychowanie.pl | Bożena Strzemieczna (Coordinator) Agnieszka Strzemieczna Patrycja Kochan Karolina Skoczek Cezary Kacprzak |



**Cooperativa Sociale Progetto Crescere (L'Arcobaleno Servizi)
(Coordinator)**

Progetto Crescere is a social cooperative from Reggio Emilia, created by two important cooperatives founded in 1993, L'Arcobaleno Servizi and Centro Lina Mazzaperlini, with the objective to develop the inclusion of children/adolescents in conditions of difficulty, in particular with learning disabilities, special needs and psychological diseases and to support families in condition of disadvantage.

It provides clinical and social-educational services to citizens and to educational organizations, thanks to a multifunctional team of experts: Neuropsychiatrists, psychologists, Language therapists, Educators, Psychomotricists, Trainers. It supports Preschools, Primary and Secondary Schools thanks to more or less 80 projects per year. Projects are focused on inclusion, integration, wellness promotion and uneasiness overcoming. The activities are Screening in schools about disadvantages; Parents/Teacher training; School guidance service for parents, students and teachers; Preventive social projects.

It organizes courses for teachers, educators and specialist figures about educational subjects. For Parents, it organizes about 20 meetings per year and It provides clinical/educational services: Parents Training about specific focus (Learning Disabilities, Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity) and about Parenthood; Counselling; Family Psychotherapy. It works with 500 families per year.

The aims are: to define actions for the prevention of disadvantages and wellness promotion; to promote innovative educational methodologies; to support teaching staff and to improve their competences; to promote dialogue between school and families and also between families (with attention to families in situation of disadvantages).

It participated in a other European project, involving parents: New Perspective on Parents education. Thanks to this project, It has created in 2011-2012 some new actions: a Parents Corner an informal way to inform and training parents; a Library about Parenthood, a Parents Tea for training parents in an informal context, a Parent Training programme and a parents section in its website ("Genitori e dintorni") Its main site has got specific spaces for parents: in particular, a Parents hall and a psychotherapy Room for families.

Today, Progetto Crescere is part of a network called Reggio Family and a project "Una Famiglia per una famiglia" (a family for a family) that support parenthood.





**Equipo de Orientación Educativa y Psicopedagógica de Molina de Segura (EOEP)
(Partner)**

This is a public team from Murcian Educational Administration.

The E.O.E.P. is a team of experts that give external support to Nursery and Primary Schools. This team deals with all the childhood and primary schools in seven towns, a total of 60 schools.

The team is composed by 22 advisers: psychologists, pedagogues, physiotherapists and a social worker that works together in an interdisciplinary way.

The team deals with all the nursery and primary schools of seven towns, a total of 60 schools.

The work is focused on three main aspects: teaching staff guidance; direct attention to students (specially doing evaluation tasks); Family guidance.

Psycho-pedagogical guidance team's main functions are: a. To give professional advice to the teaching staff so as they could work with diversity of student,

b. To collaborate with the prevention of learning and personal development difficulties,

c. To carry out the psycho-pedagogical evaluation and to decide the educational answer of students with special educational necessities (disability or gift) or of students in a position Of compensation of educational inequalities,

d. To advise about School Cohabitation Programs,

e. To contribute to the existence of courteous relations between the school and the family, by means of giving information, education and support...

EOEP participated in Grundtvig Learning Partnership (2010-2012). "New perspectives on parents education" (Partners: Italy, France, Turkey, Bulgaria and Spain)

The Spanish team has experience on European Mobilities, in particular:

- Comenius courses (Italy): Dislexia, Group Dynamics and Social Skills in the classroom, Internet pedagogical use.
- Study visits (France, Italy) Innovative training systems for disadvantaged groups.
- Pestalozzi Programme (Germany) *"Parents' contribution to a school climate for living democratic citizenship"*



Región de Murcia
Consejería de Educación,
Formación y Empleo



**Ośrodek Edukacyjny Taurus S.C.
(Partner)**

Educational Centre Taurus is a private institution. Taurus offers both stationary and on-line courses and trainings for adults. We run various courses concerning psychology, health education and prophylaxis as well as methodology of teaching. We have a wide experience in the field of creating educational syllabuses concerning sex education, in Poland there's a school subject called "education for family life". Many school teachers use our books and materials and stick to our syllabuses.

We have been organizing workshops for parents, teachers, health service workers, police workers. Our Centre runs "soft trainings" in the field of interpersonal communication (e.g. concerning conflicts solving, assertiveness), prophylaxis (e.g. aggression prevention, HIV/AIDS prophylaxis) as well as training courses in the field of didactics and classes methodology.

Our Center has a small publishing house. We are the authors of books on sex education for pupils/students and teachers. We create and publish educational materials, e.g. – e-books:

- To avoid boring lessons with the tutor- our proposals of about 100 games and exercises to integrate your class.
- Time for lesson with the tutor- the set of scripts of lessons with the tutor.
- Aggression at school. Guide for teachers and parents.
- For schools. Programmes, projects, funds. Ideas for schools - how to use money from European Union.

Educational Centre Taurus has an experience in taking part in several educational projects funded and supported by the European Commission – both as a partner and as a coordinator.

Thanks to participating in N.E.T.WORK project Educational Center

Taurus had the opportunity to expand its activities to include a new forms of activity for educators, teachers, pedagogues.

Moreover this international cooperation in the project gives us the chance to use partners' experiences in the field of education.





Sundsvalls Kommun Barn- och utbildning, Stöd- och utvecklingsteamet-förskola (Partner)

Stöd- och utvecklingsteamet, (today a part of Centrum för kunskapsbildning, Centrala Barn- och elevhälsan i Sundsvalls kommun)

Our team was first founded in 1996 with the aim of supporting schools in their work for developing inclusion for "all children" in public pre-schools and schools. (children 1 - 16 years of age).

Today, our team provides support to pre-schools and schools thanks to a multifunctional team of experts; speech and language therapists, psychologists, social workers and special educators (special pedagogues).

We work at the request of head teachers and staff focusing on inclusion, removing obstacles in the learning environment, wellness promotion etc.

We also cooperate with other teams inside and outside of the Sundsvall public school organization; other organizations of the public sector such as health care, social service, i.e. teams working particularly towards families in condition of disadvantage.

Our work is based on the national school legislation and curricula and local rules and action plans.

Some areas in Sundsvall have a high percentage of immigration and many children/pupils in our schools come from multilingual families. The Swedish government authorities demand and support schools to give emphasis to work with multi-linguality, meeting foreign families and therefore teachers both want and need training.

Our participation in this partnership has been important to improve our activities with families in direct and indirect way: we wanted to increase competences in educational figures of our staff and in the same time to give more support to families in condition of disadvantages.

Thanks to this N.E.T.WORK project we have had the opportunity to create new ideas to support and give training to teachers in pre-schools about how to meet and cooperate with new families coming to Sweden from other countries.

The first step: the research

The instrument: a questionnaire

The group defined a questionnaire (annex n. 1) in order to create a frame of reference for creation of N.E.T.WORK training.

Basic pattern of the questionnaire was common for all partners and applied in each country. Nevertheless in some countries additional diverse forms of the questionnaire were used and various target groups were taken into consideration while conducting the survey.

Thanks to this strategy, the questionnaire gave common directions to go but alongside maintained diversity and uniqueness of each partner's needs in the field of support for educational figures in their daily work with parents.

The questionnaire was a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions. Basically it was a junction of 2 'scale questions', 2 'open questions' and 2 'dichotomic questions'. That strict form was applied by Polish partners. Basic Form was in a way transformed and applied by Spanish partners. Italian and Swedish groups added more qualitative nominal variables and Swedish members did a brainstorming aid as a part of the research.

As the two initial questions we placed those based on the measurement scale.

The features that those questions intended to define could be analyzed separately or together as 'ratio'.

The two next questions were open and aimed at catching the crucial concepts. On the one hand focus was on the indication of positive aspects of relations with parents and on the other side - in the reflex of this indication – on getting closer to the way of thinking demonstrated by respondents and to sorts of problems we should address our attention while creating N.E.T.WORK.

Two last questions were dichotomous and were the logical consequence of previous ones. Precise manifestation of our respondents' expectations in the field of the subjects and of the tools/methodology of prospective N.E.T.WORK courses was intended.

Swedish and Italian groups decided to place qualitative questions related to individual vocational features of respondents (kind of school, vocational role in school, work experience etc.).

Italian partners not only placed these nominal features as an additional nominal variable but also as a point of reference for results' analysis (kind of school).

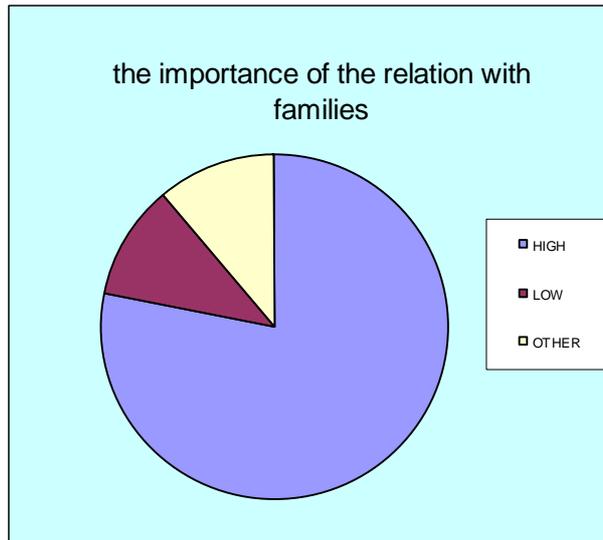
Polish, Swedish and Italian partners specified concrete target group of recipients and this was a factor that had an influence both on particular results in each country and methodology used.

Results

The whole number of our replies is 510, including teachers from pre-schools to high schools.

Question 1

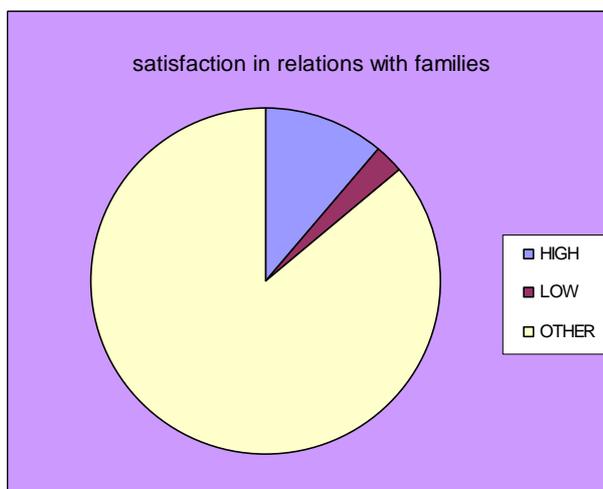
The importance of the relation with family in my professional role



- Almost **78%** of all our recipients declared that they perceived the importance of the relation with families as HIGH (they indicated the maximum value in the numeral scale).
- Almost **1%** of all our recipients declared that they perceived the importance of the relation with families as LOW (they indicated the minimum value in the numeral scale).

Question 2

Your level of satisfaction about the relation with families in your work



- Only less than **11%** of all our recipients declared that they perceived their satisfaction in their relations with families as HIGH (they indicated the maximum value on the numeral scale).
- Luckily, only about **3%** of all our recipients declared that they perceived their satisfaction in their relations with families as LOW (they indicated the minimum value on the numeral scale).
- Almost **86%** recipients that perceive their satisfaction in their relations with families as 'in some way **acceptable or passable but surely not high enough**.

From Swedish and Italian research we know, that the majority of respondents define their relationship with families by using positive words.

Question 3

Describe positive aspects in the relation with families in your personal professional experience

The answers are different in each country - according to the target group of recipients examined.

In Sweden where the main focus is put on meeting new-arrived families, positive aspects of relations are associated with inter-cultural ones such as chances to take part in other cultures, becoming more open-minded, being appreciated and seen by others, getting acquainted with new perspectives and overcoming stereotypes. **In Spain** we can observe the answers that can be valid for Swedish reality as well.

Spanish qualitative data before categorization stated that positive aspects of relations with families were associated with involving families into school life and with getting more familiar with family contexts of particular cases. **In Italy** positive aspects were associated with the ability to establish a dialogue with particular family and seek better strategies and solutions for overcoming difficulties (learning difficulties or emotional ones). **In Poland** where the emphasis is put on work with families in gymnasium (elder pupils), positive aspects were associated with effective communication and effective mutual control over pupils that are at risk (social, emotional or cognitive risk).

Question 4

For which kind of issues, you find more difficulties to talk about with families?

Data indicates that it is hard to talk about:

- Learning difficulties and problems with child's development
- Problematic and negative behaviors of students
- Emotional problems of pupils
- Different family values in different countries, i.e. legislation about gender equality, chastisement

Question 5

If you have a chance to participate in a course about your relationship with parents, which subjects could you choose?

Our educational figures expected to receive trainings in the field of improving their communication skills, especially in the field of passing difficult information. That means they wanted to be given a guidance to make communication with parents more effective and conscious.

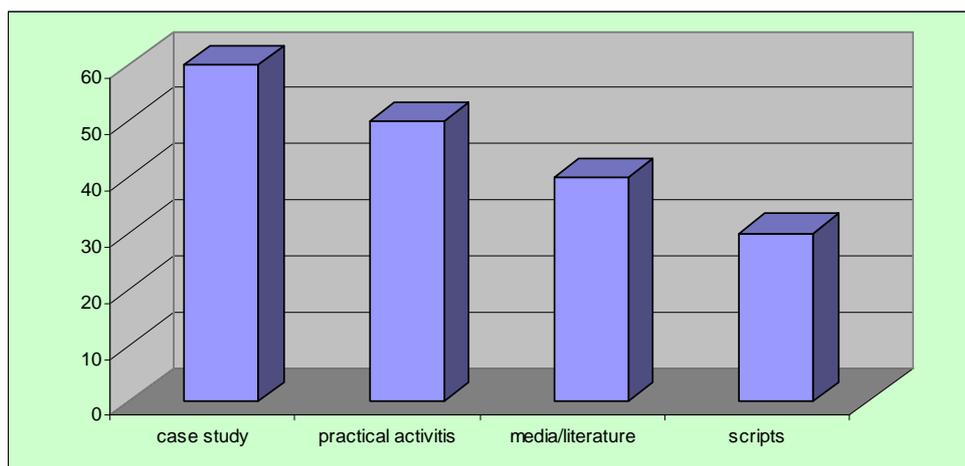
Another big need, related to previous one, is focused on skills aimed at involving families into school life and making them more engaged in creation of process of mutual understanding.

Thus, as for the **subject** of prospective trainings, our recipients indicated a little bit different answers but all of them can be put into three fields:

- How to give in a positive way difficult issues
- How to involve and motivate families to meet you
- How to reach a cooperative relation with parents

Question 6

If you have a chance to participate in a course about your relationship with parents, which tools could you choose?



Recipients indicated as follows:

Over **60%** of our educational figures pointed out **case study**

Over **50%** of our educational figures pointed out **practical activities**

Over **40%** of our educational figures pointed out **media and literature materials**

Over **30 %** of our educational figures pointed out **written scripts**

Many recipients indicated the need to have possibilities to receive support of professional figures in the field of effective communication with families and managing own communication skills.

The second step: the creation of the training

According to the results of the research, the group has created the new training, collecting previous experiences and creating new materials and instruments.

The training is divided in:

an introduction to the content and three different sections/focus.

The first part "**Introduction: the communication**" is a theoretical part concerning communication (see Power Point presentation).

The second part comprises three different focus:

1. **How to motivate and involve parents into cooperation with teachers/pedagogues:**
 Topics are: what does "parents' participation in school" mean? Which are the main aspects that facilitate or make difficult the cooperation with parents? Which are the emotions felt by teacher working with parents? Are there any stereotypes that facilitate or make difficult the communication between parents and teachers? Relationship teachers-parents: which meanings?
2. **How to build up a good relationship with parents:**
 Topics are: strong and weak elements to establish a good relationship with others; the first impression of people; factors that are in favor of effective and positive communication; to define elements that are disruptive; which are different communication styles
3. **How to talk on difficult issues regarding children:**

Topics are: difficult topics to talk about with parents; rules of efficient communication to talk about difficult issues

The training has got also a part dedicated to the first year of the Primary school, about the **welcome** in the new school.

| Section | Subject |
|---------------------------|---|
| INTRODUCTION | <i>Communication</i> |
| Icebreaking Activities | <i>Participants' presentation and introduction</i> |
| First Focus (or Meeting) | <i>How to motivate and involve parents into cooperation with teachers and pedagogues?</i> |
| Second Focus (or Meeting) | <i>How to build up a good relationship with parents?</i> |
| Enclosed | <i>Welcome in the 1st year of the primary school</i> |
| Third Focus (or Meeting) | <i>How to talk on difficult issues regarding children?</i> |

Focus have a specific structure thought to work in the best way with the target group.

1. Each meeting begins with an **Initial Evaluation**: the collection of expectation of the members of the group let they feel free to explain the reason why they are attending the course and which are their previous knowledge concerning the topic of the day.
2. The second part is called **Activities for the topic**: this is the heart of the focus, in which topics are explained and put in practice by learner thanks to practical exercises. Exercises can be different depending on the issue: role playing, brainstorming, cooperative learning activities, case studies, viewing of an extract of a film
3. The last part of each meeting is the one concerning **Conclusion Activities**: trainer together with the whole group of learners draws conclusions. Participants are encouraged to assess the usefulness of the training and to share any ideas, conclusions and proposals with others. The activity called *My future Action Plan* is the last part of the work: participants think about tasks developed and skills learnt during the meeting and create their personal future action plan.

The main objective of the training is to create a space where teachers can:

- Reflect on the parents participation in school benefits.
- Analyse the aspects that favor and complicate parents participation.
- Propose new ways to achieve parents participation and collaboration.
- Analyse the difficulties that appear in the parents-teachers communication.
- Improve teacher communication skills.
- Reflect on the different ways of communication with families and acquire strategies that let teachers deal with them in a positive way.

To use the training see the section “Introduction to the training”.

The third step: the experimentation of the training

A first version of the training has been tested in the four countries from January to May 2014. 154 teachers have been involved in the experimentation and they have evaluated the training thanks to a questionnaire (Annex n.2).

The impact of the implementation has been positive.

The participants appreciated contents, methodology, materials and tools, in particular the active method based on the comparison between group members, sharing experiences and case studies. They evaluated the course useful for their work (4,5/5 on a scale from 1 to 5).

More information about results of the questionnaire, in the Annex n.3 (*Final Evaluation Synthesis*).

The fourth step: the final version of the training

The implementation and the results of questionnaires, in particular suggestions and observations, have permitted to define a final version of the training included in the II part of this Manual.



II PART: the training

Introduction to the Training

This training for teachers and educational figures about the relationship and communication with parents, is a collection of ideas, activities and instruments divided into three different focuses. This “think-tank” is supposed to be used in a flexible way.

The three focuses are:

- Focus No. 1: How to motivate and involve parents into cooperation with teachers and pedagogues?
- Focus No. 2: How to build up a good relationship with parents?
- Focus No. 3: How to talk on difficult about difficult issues regarding children?

The training can be organized either in three meetings or adapted in another form.

Each activity and instrument should be used in relation to the specific context, i. e. participants, the aim of training, previous knowledge in the group, etc. Trainers can also, if they want, give short reflective lectures, relating to current research in the actual topic.

All the activities or instruments collected in the manual must not be used. The trainer is free to choose suitable parts from each focus, modify or add activities and instruments. In this collection there are also some “**blank pages**” for collecting new ideas, activities or instruments.

The training is based on an active participation of learners.

The trainers are therefore encouraged to have in mind:

- What kind of group is this?
- Which activities and instruments in the manual are suitable for this particular group?
- Is it possible to use the activity and instrument as described in the manual, or do I have to modify the form or content?
- Do I, as a trainer, need to add a new activity or instrument?

Last but not least – enjoy your work as a trainer.

Good luck!

Icebreaking Activities

Activity n° 0.

Icebreaking activities

INSTRUCTION

- Participants introduce themselves to the group

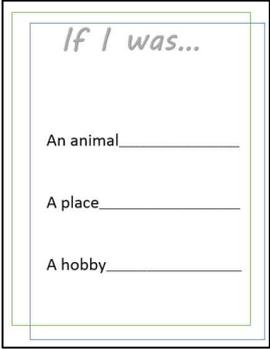
Variant A. "If I was"

- 5 minutes per person: each participant fill in the *Instrument 0a*.
- Then, each participant introduces himself/herself to the group

TOOLS:

- One copy of *Instrument 0* per participant
- One pen per participant

INSTRUMENT 0a



If I was...

An animal _____

A place _____

A hobby _____

Variant B. "Self portrait"

- Give to each participant a white paper and crayons
- Each participant draws a self-portrait
- The trainer collects pictures
- The trainer give to each participant a picture randomly
- Each participant looks to pictures and finds the correspondent person
- The participant has 2 minutes to interview the person and to come back to his/her place
- When everyone has finished interview, each participant introduces to the group person whom he/she has interviewed.

TOOLS:

- A paper per participant
- Crayons

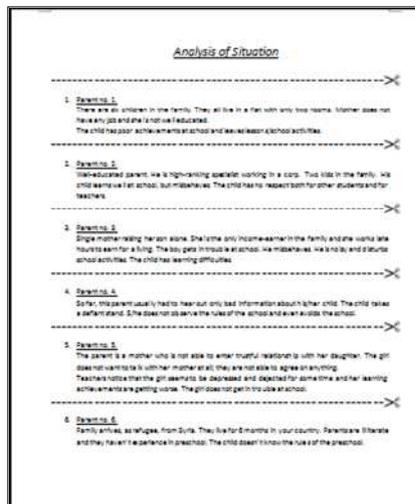


attitude towards parent and his/her child. In turn this may help to succeed in encouraging parent to cooperation, even if s/he is not eager to cooperate at first.

TOOLS:

- Instrument n°6
- Scissors

Instrument n°6



TIME: 20'

Activity n°1.8

Practical advice on how to make cooperation with parents easier

INSTRUCTIONS

The trainer shows to participants photos of different teachers (Instrument n° 7).

The task is to:

- Write down your very first impression about a particular teacher.
- Imagine how the conversation would go. What kind of conversation do you think you can expect?
- Group discussion

TOOLS:

- Slides of the Instrument n°7
- A computer with a projector
- A pen and a sheet to each participants where to take notes

Instrument n° 7



TIME: 10'



Meeting No. 2

Subject: How to build up a good relationship with parents?

0. INITIAL EVALUATION and BRIDGING ACTIVITIES

0.1. Previous knowledge and expectations about the course (initial evaluation)

0.2. Bridge activity: a connection with previous meeting

1. ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP THE TOPIC

1.1. What helps to establish good relations with others? What hinders our good relations with others?

1.2. *Practical exercises*

1.3. Films

1.4. Communication styles

2. CONCLUSION ACTIVITIES

2.1. Summary

2.2. Which are my expectations to develop my Future Action Plan?

*. ENCLOSED

- A copy of Instrument n° 12 and a pen per participants

TIME: 20'

Activity 1.4. Communication styles

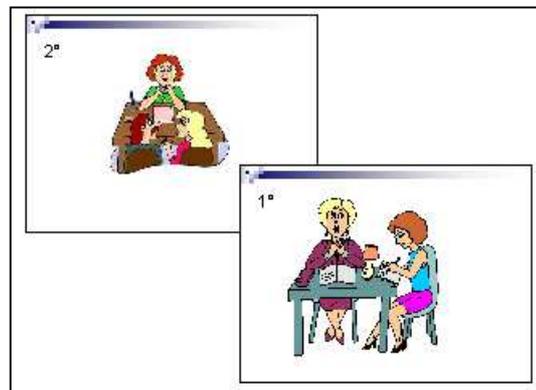
Variant A: INSTRUCTIONS

Trainer shows two pictures representing different communicative styles (Instrument 15).
The group should describe pictures thinking about positive and negative elements of each one.
The trainer, in the same time, creates a collection of ideas. Drawing conclusions.

TOOLS:

- A computer with a projector
- Slides 1°, 2° (Instrument n°15)
- Blackboard and chalks for the trainer to create the brainstorming

Instrument n° 15



Variant B. Role playing

Trainer shows select two participants, to represent different situations about different communicative styles.

The group should describe situation thinking about positive and negative elements of each one.

The trainer, in the same time, creates a collection of ideas.

Drawing conclusions.

TOOLS

- Blackboard and chalks for the trainer to create the brainstorming

TIME: 15'



Meeting No. 2

Subject: How to talk on difficult issues regarding children?

0. INITIAL EVALUATION and BRIDGING ACTIVITIES

- 0.1. Previous knowledge and expectations about the course (initial evaluation)
- 0.2. Bridge: Connection with previous meeting

1. ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP THE TOPIC

- 1.1. What topics (issues) are difficult for teachers to talk about with parents?
- 1.2. Rules of efficient communication.
- 1.3. Roleplaying
- 1.4. How should we talk about some difficult cases? What was the most difficult in that situation?

2. CONCLUSION ACTIVITIES

- 2.1. Drawing conclusions and discussion. Feedback.
- 2.2. Which are my expectations to develop my Future Action Plan?



Instrument 9

Action plan

for transferring the outcomes

My next steps:

- In my school
- In other networks

Plan steps in next months

Where do I want to be in a year from now?

| Where do I want to be in a year from now? | | |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| My personal action plan | | |
| MONTH | In my SCHOOL | Other NETWORKS |
| October 2013 | | |

- How to reach a cooperative relation with parents YES NO
- How to solve conflicts with parents YES NO
- How to prevent and cope aggressive behaviours of parents YES NO
- How to manage your negative feelings towards parents and develop positive approach YES NO
- How to give in a positive way difficult issues YES NO
- How to involve and motivate families to meet you YES NO
- How to give families opportunities to participate at school life YES NO
- Other topics.....
- Other topics.....
- Other topics.....
- Other topics.....

5. If you have a chance to participate in a course about your relationship with parents, which **tools** could you choose?

- Written Scripts YES NO
- Active methods (drama...) YES NO
- Case studies YES NO
- Additional materials (extracts from films, references...) YES NO
- Other tools.....
- Other tools
- Other tools
- Other tools

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