

Why is it important to involve parents in schools?



There are many reasons for the educational participation of parents; among the most important are the following:

Because it is a fundamental right and responsibility:

The involvement of parents in the education of children is a **right recognised both nationally** and internationally.

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Parents do not only have the right to participate in schools in an independent and responsible manner, but also **the duty** to do so in accordance with their abilities and skills.

The right of participation implies **legal obligations for schools**. By not allowing parents to exercise this right, they would **violate** a fundamental right recognised in international legal texts and in most national constitutions.

Because it significantly improves the quality of education:

Numerous researches and studies demonstrate the important influence of this right on the quality of learning and the whole development of students.

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The quality of learning is the result of **joint and coordinated work of all stakeholders** in the educational community within the centres, but the problems start with a lack or **inefficient participation** of these agents in the educational activity centre. For example, the lower the involvement, support and participation of one of the educators from the centre, **the greater will be the effort needed** from the others to achieve the desired educational quality for students.

Hence, the awareness of parents to all the mechanisms or measures taken by the educational system in its **effort to enforce the joint participation** between teachers and families in the education of their children is essential.

Because all parents desire the best for their children:

Ideally a sense of personal and general **well-being** is needed in order to grow and develop integrally in an autonomous manner within a framework of freedom and responsibility.

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To accomplish this in all areas and levels of life in the school, **educational authorities** should ensure that schools can exercise their own autonomy of pedagogy, of organisation and management. How? By acquiring **systems of evaluation**, monitoring and control in compliance with the minimum conditions necessary for the centre to achieve the goals that society demands: **quality education** for all under conditions of equality and equal opportunities.

The **autonomy of schools**, exercised through democratic organs of participation, **guarantees parents the opportunity to decide** on the type of education they want for their children, on the organisation of school schedules according **to their needs** (a continuous, split or mixed day), on how to put students together, that is on the model of coexistence, on the creation of spaces and services that suit them, etc.



Activities for organisations and associations of parents

After reading the previous section, we propose a set of group activities for communal reflection and analysis.

Activity 1: Forum

Objective: To conduct an exercise in critical reflection on the reasons for the participation of mothers and fathers in schools.

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Estimated time: The spontaneous nature of this technique is such that it should adapt to the group dynamic.

Dynamics and development of the activity:

Once parents are gathered, the coordinator presents the theme to be discussed. In the event of no one initiating the debate, the coordinator raises some issues in order to trigger the discussion. Once new ideas and relevant aspects related to the subject appear in the forum, a synthesis of views expressed will be done.

Role of the coordinator: A motivating presentation of the subject. Giving the floor in the order by which it is requested. Not to interfere with his own opinions unless it is necessary to stimulate participation. Preparing the conclusions reached by the group at the end of the activity.

Recommendations:

Once the activity is being finalized and during the final synthesis, it may be interesting to guide and strengthen some key ideas that appeared during the discussion.

Similarly, mothers and fathers can be suggested to list all the reasons that justify an active role in

their school.

Activity 2: Workshop to develop cooperation between parents and teachers (school-family)

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What knowledge and skills should a 16 year-old have?

* Activity designed and developed by the National Association of Parents SOS ("Skole Samfund Og") of Denmark and distributed to all parents associations of EPA (European Parents Association)

Introduction:

The correct collaboration between family and school occurs when, by respecting differences, both teachers and parents work together toward the same goal of education, which has been previously agreed upon in a relationship of openness, equality, trust, respect and responsibility.

The collaboration promotes dialogue among participants regarding:

- Knowledge and skills that children should have.
- The attitudes of children.
- The cooperation of Family - School.
- What they expect from each other.

Objectives:

- To invite parents to participate in the debate on the education of children: talk, listen and learn.
- To help raise awareness on what we can do for others.
- To avoid providing definitive answers, nor to designate winners and losers.

Development of the activity:

It is advised to organise the activity with parents of one class, at the most, at the beginning of the school year, taking advantage of the first parent meeting at school. It is not required to do previous preparatory work. Total length: about 40 minutes.

- 1.- Start the session by asking parents: What knowledge and skills should a 16 year-old have? We have a list of 40 skills and abilities, which is annexed, for them to consider.
- 2.- Distribute the sheet amongst parents participating in the meeting and ask them to form groups of 5 or 6 and to nominate a representative for each group.
- 3.- Ask the members of each group to discuss together and divide the list into three categories:
 - knowledge and skills which they must have
 - knowledge and skills that are not indispensable

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- knowledge and skills which they do not need

The facilitator writes the results of the groups on a blackboard.

4.- Ask each group, to indicate which knowledge and skills they decided children should have, and who is the person best suited to help them acquire such knowledge and skills: parents, the school, both

The facilitator then writes the results of the groups on a board.

5.- Finally, ask the parents to select the 5 knowledge and skills they consider most important for their children. Write the results on a board and reflect on what happened. Normally, the top 5 appear in the column "Responsibility of the ones and the others", which impress parents considerably.



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