TOOLBOX
to improve urban school-family partnership

Quickscan
for improving school-family partnership in secondary education

Assessing school-family partnership at your school

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the Netherlands, 2017

Aspects of school-family partnership

School-family partnership starts with a positive, cooperative and reciprocal partnership between school and parents and with well-organized contact with parents. This relationship is the foundation for alignment between school and parents about the pedagogical and educational guidance of their child and about the guidance of the student's choices during his/her school education.

The quick scan is organized along three main aspects:

- a positive attitude towards parents
- a reciprocal relationship between school and parents
- alignment between school and parents about the pedagogical and educational guidance of their child and of the guidance of the student's choices during his/her school education.

Factors for success in school-family partnership

Ten factors for success can be used to help schools focus on improvement. These factors can be divided into three main sections: improving contact between school and parents, developing cooperation between school, parents and students, and guiding and supporting student development.

Ten factors for success for improving contact between school and parents

Factors for success for initiating **CONTACT** between school and parents		
1	**welcome**	ensure parents feel welcome and valued
2	**introduction**	arrange an introductory meeting with every parent early in the school year
3	**all parents**	engage the parents (or another caret-taker) of every child in the education of their child
Factors for success for developing COOPERATION between school, parents and pupils		
4	**role of student**	invite students to attend regular meeting with their parents
5	**reciprocity**	ensure reciprocity of information between school and parents
6	**facilitation**	facilitate communication between parents and students at home
7	**positive attention**	focus on the positive
Factors for success for supporting the student in his/her FUTURE CAREER PROSPECTS		
8	**choices**	take the student's educational choices as a focal point in contact with parents
9	**development**	make a student development plan clearly indicating the roles of the student, the parents and school
10	**perspective**	discuss disappointments related to student's development with the parents and the student and create a new perspective

Completing the quickscan

To get a good picture of the school, we suggest that several teaching staff members independently complete the quick scan. Please take time to complete the quick scan: observation and self-evaluation is required. Compare the scores of each teaching staff member who completed the quick scan. This will allow you to assess which issues you agree on, which issues you disagree on, and which issues you think might need some improvement. Together you can then make suggestions and establish priorities to improve school-family partnership at your school (see last page).

++ = totally agree, + = agree, +/- = neutral, - = do not agree,
- - = do not agree at all, ? = I don't know.

Attitude and organisation

	++	+	+/-	-	- -	?
welcome (1): friendliness						
Does the school value cooperation with parents?						
Are the teachers respectful when talking to parents?						
Are the teachers interested in the student's background and home environment?						
Are the staff (from director to caretaker) friendly and welcoming to parents?						
Are the staff friendly to parents who approach the school (in person, by phone or email)?						
welcome (1): accessibility						
Is the school building accessible to parents (obvious main entrance, reception, signs)?						
Is the school accessible by telephone (is the telephone answered quickly)?						
Are teachers easily accessible for parents (by telephone or e-mail)?						
Can parents easily schedule appointments with teachers (efficient parent-teacher conference scheduling)?						
welcome (1): clarity						
Are parents aware of the formal and informal contact possibilities the school offers?						
Do staff agree on how to cooperate with parents?						
Is there a calendar for classroom activities with parents and does the school stick to this calendar?						
Does the school clearly communicate what it expects of parents?						

Relationship	++	+	+/-	-	- -	?
introduction (2)						
Do the teachers meet with students' parents early in the school year?						
Does the school know about the student's family composition, home environment, parents' profession, and whether there are any concerns?						
Do the teachers know about the student's prior school achievements (change of school, school records, behavioral problems such as bullying or a victim of bullying)?						
Do the teachers know how parents perceive their child (behaviour, learning ability, peculiarities)?						
all parents (3)						
Do the teachers know a parent of each student (and/or another important adult)?						
Can the teachers cope with diverse cultural backgrounds, and with varying language skills and educational levels of parents?						
Does the school invite all parents to regular meetings (even if all goes well)?						
Does the student know who the teacher contact is in the family (in the case of divorced parents)?						
student role's (4)						
Do students structurally attend parent-teacher meetings?						
Does the student have a clear role in these meetings?						
reciprocity (5)						
Is there interaction and dialogue during parent-teacher conferences?						
Is there an exchange of information between teacher, parent and student at individual meetings?						
Do the teachers have sufficient skills to conduct a conversation with the parents and the student together?						
Do the teachers ask the parents and the student to propose discussion topics before the parent-teacher meeting?						
Do the teachers focus both on the development and guidance of the student at school, and on the development and guidance at home or during extra curriculum activities?						
Do the teachers usually manage to find a solution to problems together with the parents and the student?						
Do teachers (and other members of the staff) usually manage to cooperate with parents in case of problems?						

Alignment

	++	+	+/-	-	- -	?
facilitation (6)						
Does the school facilitate parents to support their children?						
Does school use interactive homework assignments to facilitate dialogue between parents and their children about the curriculum and about the choices available to students?						
Does the school have a homework policy and is the role of the parents clear and aligned with the capabilities of the parents?						
Does the school offer parent training sessions on how parents can support their child at school and at home?						
positive attention (7)						
Do the teachers give parents reason to take pride in their child by focusing on the positive and paying systematic attention to what is going well?						
Do the teachers have regular contact with parents even if all is going well?						
Do the teachers adopt a positive and encouraging approach to the student and so act as a role model to parents?						
Do teachers share bad news gradually with parents?						
choices (8)						
Are the student's interests, aspirations and choices discussed during parent-teacher meetings?						
Is sufficient attention devoted to the motives and abilities of the student during parent-teacher meetings?						
Can the teachers assess the abilities and needs of the student and can they align these with the aspirations and expectations of the parents?						
development (9)						
Do the teachers establish development points for each student with student and parents and discuss how the student, his/her mentor and the parents can provide support?						
Does this plan focus on how the student can develop his/her talents in school and in extracurricular activities (with help from parents and school)						
Does the school discuss student developmental and behavioural issues with the parents first before involving external professionals?						
perspective (10)						
Do the teachers facilitate parents to talk with their children about their qualities, motives and choices in their education?						
Does the school provide information about choices in the school career and about the role of parents in these choices (e.g. attend open days)?						

	++	+	+/-	-	- -	?
perspective (10)						
Are parents structurally involved in talks with the student counsellor?						
Are the teachers sufficiently familiar with further education and professions and do they discuss this information with parents?						
Does the teacher discuss disappointments with the student and parents, and can the teacher help to redirect these dis-appointments to a new perspective?						

priorities and suggestions to improve			
	How do you rate the school for every aspect of working with parents?	Which aspect should be prioritized to improve school-family partnership?	How can the school obtain the support of the team for this improvement?
Attitude and Organisation			
Relationships			
Alignment			
First step in improvement?			

This quickscan is based on a similar scan for secondary education, which is used as a tool to help 15 schools decide which interventions to implement to improve school family-school partnership (Lusse, 2013). Based on this format, quickscans have also been developed for primary education and for senior secondary vocational education.

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