



The TOOLBOX

TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THEIR EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS



FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

TOOL: Prevention | Intervention

TARGET AUDIENCE: School-aged children in elementary and secondary school

TOOL INTENDED FOR: Professionals | Parents



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– Details: Teachers and parents

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NEEDS AND BEHAVIOURAL MANIFESTATIONS

- Family-school partnership
- Communication with parents

SPECIFIC GOALS

- To define the role of communication between the family and school in order to promote students' development.
- To explain the needs and strategies associated with optimal parent-teacher communication.

DESIGN

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This tool focuses on the link between school and family. The parent-teacher partnership is based on:

- **A shared view that families and schools want the best for students;**
- **A willingness in family and school settings to provide a stimulating and encouraging learning environment for all children to develop, thrive and succeed;**
- **Good parent-teacher communication.**

This partnership between parents is a key component of student motivation and learning. It is even more important in times of crisis, since it provides greater consistency in children's follow-up and support, thereby promoting children's well-being and sense of security.

The following are some essential components of positive and effective parent-teacher communication:

1st – STRUCTURE

Parents are the main allies for teachers when it comes to supporting students' optimal development. Everyone wants the best for students, but it is important that significant adults in students' lives agree on the means to help students reach their full potential. To ensure that they work in the same direction, it is important that teachers provide a structure for parents. This involves:

- **Clearly communicating parents' and students' rules and expectations**
(e.g. homework must be done by children and not parents; lessons and homework must be completed by Friday morning);
- **Explaining the reasons for these rules and expectations**
(e.g. homework identifies content that needs to be reviewed in class; weekly monitoring takes place on Fridays in the second period).

Ultimately, this will result in:

- (1) Parents being able to support their children in a manner that is consistent with the learning objectives identified by teachers;
- (2) Parents being able to internalize the importance of classroom or school rules and adopt them in a self-determined manner.

Since these rules may also change very quickly, this classroom and school information and communication system should be implemented continuously throughout the year.

2nd – CONSISTENCY AND REGULARITY

At the beginning of the school year, communication with parents will be a key factor in ensuring continuity and consistency between classroom and home activities.

In the current context, where certain rules for monitoring students will be new and may change very quickly during the year, implementing a communication system will make it possible to send parents necessary information to oversee students' learning. In doing so, it is advisable to:

- Maintain regular contact with parents (using the calendar, newsletters, short email videos, etc.) – these can be brief;
- Be clear in communications (e.g. the most important information is presented more prominently in bullet form);
- Reduce aspects that distract from the message (e.g. using different font sizes and colours in the same message);
- Consolidate all types of messages into a single mailing (if by email) or post (if on a platform such as Classroom) rather than sending many messages;
- Structure messages so that a specific number of topics are included (e.g. homework, weekly lessons, special activities, documents to be signed, public health requirements);
- Always present these topics in the same order (some may be blank when mailing);
- Have the main documents or messages translated in order to ensure the understanding of most parents. In some cases, call upon community interpreters or organizations that assist allophone families.

Since not all schools or school service centres provide access to Classroom communication platforms, it may be tempting for teachers to use easily accessible solutions (e.g. Facebook). We encourage teachers to think about the use of social networks and the boundary between their communication roles and responsibilities on this type of platform, which provides access to information about people's private lives.





3rd – MUTUAL RESPECT

Family-school partnerships are first and foremost based on mutual respect between parents and teachers:

- Parents recognize that teachers have expertise in education and trust their professional judgment;
- Teachers recognize that parents are the ones who know students best, their needs and life course.

Parents and teachers therefore have a responsibility to develop mutual respect and trust. This relationship develops when the parties:

- Listen to each other;
- Are open to each other's background and different ways of doing things;
- Try to put themselves in the other person's shoes;
- Show empathy.

In today's challenging family and school environment, parent-school communication and partnerships are two key components for ensuring continuity, follow-up and success for all students.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Réseau d'information sur la réussite éducative (RIRE)
<http://rire.ctreq.qc.ca/bibliotheque/>

Centre de transfert pour la réussite éducative du Québec (CTREQ)
<http://www.ctreq.qc.ca/>

Canada Research Chair on Parenting and Academic and Vocational Trajectories
<http://www.parents-education.chaire.ulaval.ca/>

