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Deliverable IO3

Training and Mentoring Framework for Parent and Peer Advocates

Better Together

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IO3/Task

The inclusion of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SENDs) in daily classrooms is considered a high priority. Nonetheless, its implementation in practice is affected by a wide range of factors, some of which are related with the involvement and attitudes of diverse stakeholders, such as parents of typically developing children, and teachers. Importantly, inclusion and inclusive education are described as **benefiting not only children with SENDs** (e.g., friendships, increased social initiations, relationships, and networks), but also **children without SENDs, their parents and teachers** (e.g., increased opportunities to master activities by practising and teaching others, development of empathy skills, increased appreciation, and acceptance of individual differences).
This framework aims to provide information, activities, and proposals for reflection, to sensitise and promote positive attitudes regarding inclusion and inclusive education. It is **addressed to parents of typically developing children and also teachers**, who play an important role in promoting equal opportunities and inclusive education, and consequently more social inclusion and fairer societies, where the rights of all children and their families are met. It is why we call this framework “Better Together”.

Title

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IO3: TRAINING AND MENTORING FRAMEWORK FOR PARENT AND PEER ADVOCATES

Better Together

Introduction

What is this framework about? Whom is it addressed to?

The inclusion of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SENDs) in daily classrooms is considered a high priority. Nonetheless, its implementation in practice is affected by a wide range of factors, some of which are related with the involvement and attitudes of diverse stakeholders, such as parents of typically developing children, and teachers. Importantly, inclusion and inclusive education are described as **benefiting not only children with SENDs** (e.g., friendships, increased social initiations, relationships, and networks), but also **children without SENDs, their parents and teachers** (e.g., increased opportunities to master activities by practising and teaching others, development of empathy skills, increased appreciation, and acceptance of individual differences).

This framework aims to provide information, activities, and proposals for reflection, to sensitise and promote positive attitudes regarding inclusion and inclusive education. It is **addressed to parents of typically developing children and also teachers**, who play an important role in promoting equal opportunities and inclusive education, and consequently more social inclusion and fairer societies, where the rights of all children and their families are met. It is why we call this framework "Better Together".

In this training and mentoring framework, you will find (1) a **self-assessment tool**, (2) a **knowledge section** with several topics related to inclusion and diversity, (3) in-person training **session plans to develop competences** towards the promotion of inclusion, and (4) diverse **practical tools and strategies** to support you in facilitating the acquisition of such competences.

1. Self-assessment tool

About this self-assessment tool

This self-assessment tool is designed to support you, as a parent of a child with typical development or a teacher, in enhancing inclusive education practices and experiences, based on the establishment of close collaboration and partnerships with different stakeholders (parents, teachers, other professionals from the community), towards the

inclusion of all children, and particularly of children with special education needs and disabilities (SENDs).

The inclusion of all children, with and without SENDs, is crucial to developing a culture of human rights, characterised by diversity. Therefore, considering the rights of all children, must be ensured in all settings, from the family to the school context, since the earliest ages.

Notably, multiple benefits are associated with the inclusion of children, and of children with SENDs - when your family, your education setting, or your local community are more sensitive to all children's rights and more responsive to their needs, they tend to be more accessible, inclusive, and a real promoter of all children's competences and wellbeing. Families of children with and without SENDs, professionals, and other stakeholders from the community, play a fundamental role in promoting inclusive settings and ensuring children's inclusion. Importantly, all intervenients' perspectives, knowledge and skills are fundamental to ensure that inclusive practices and family-centred approaches are adopted and effectively implemented.

This self-assessment tool was inspired by the testimonies of parents of children with SENDs from Greece, Hungary, The Netherlands, and Portugal. Nonetheless, its purpose is to support all parents, teachers, and other professionals in reflecting about their practices and experiences towards the inclusion of all children, particularly the inclusion of children with SENDs aged 0 to 7 years old. This tool was also developed based on several models and approaches (e.g., bioecological model, family centred approach, Lundy model of participation and Hart's ladder of participation, etc.) that are considered relevant for the promotion of inclusion and inclusive education.

How the self-assessment tool is structured

This self-assessment tool is composed of several items for parents of children with typical development for teachers' reflection. All items described in the self-assessment refer to experiences and practices with respect to promoting children's inclusion. The extent to which you have experienced these situations or implemented such practices is an indication of the extent to which children are included and have their rights respected within your family, your setting, or your community.

Statements included in this tool are structured around diverse topics (e.g., respect for children's rights, ensuring an inclusive space, considering children's voices and initiatives, etc.). When reflecting on each item, you may consider to what extent some of the statements reflect your experiences/practices – you must select the number you consider most suitable, from 1 to 4 (with 1 indicating *not at all* and 4 indicating *to a large extent*). Please note that it is OK to choose 'not at all', if necessary. Also, if you feel that a statement is not entirely applicable to your experiences or practices, we then suggest that you choose the option that you consider closest to your own experiences/practices. We encourage you to be honest, even if you perceive an item as a bit uncomfortable. This self-assessment tool is aimed at promoting self-reflection, so you can reflect and

monitor the progress of your perspectives and practices, without any judgement or criticism involved.

The statements presented may serve as an inspiration, improvement, or as a starting point for discussion with colleagues/families. We thus hope this tool encourages and supports your reflections, individually or with other colleagues, professionals, or family members!

As a parent of a child with typical development or a teacher…	1 Not at all	2	3	4 To a large extent
1. I actively seek ways to build a positive collaboration and partnerships with parents and other professionals.				
2. I actively seek ways to establish positive interactions with every child and between all children in the classroom/setting.				
3. I encourage children, families, and other professionals to provide contributions (e.g., regarding services, plans, activities, projects), based on their needs, knowledge, and experiences.				
4. I actively encourage children to respect each other and each other's perspectives (e.g., by discussing the importance of different characteristics, competences, experiences).				
5. I reflect and discuss with children, parents, and other professionals the benefits, for different interventions (e.g., for families, children with and without special needs and disabilities), from including all children (i.e., with diverse characteristics, needs, competences).				
6. I support all children, regardless of their characteristics and competences, in developing their own ideas, making their own proposals, initiating their own initiatives, and cooperating with their peers.				
7. I organise spaces in a way that allows all children to participate (e.g., placing materials at children's level, so that children can easily access materials and do not face physical barriers).				
8. I help children, families, and professionals understand and reflect on the importance of involving all children in issues, activities, and projects affecting them.				
9. I make the necessary efforts to involve all children, families, and professionals in the education process (e.g., adjusting the way I communicate, considering children's and families' needs; involving all intervenients in establishing goals and strategies).				
10. I use multiple strategies to include all children, to help them express themselves and support their participation, based on their perspectives, interests, and preferences.				

11. I respect and reflect on children and families' needs, perspectives, preferences, and experiences, trying to understand the reasons behind their decisions and supporting them accordingly.				
12. I plan situations and opportunities for families and other professionals to gather and discuss together on the best strategies, practices, and ways of supporting children, including those with special needs and disabilities.				
13. I include children and families' interests in the pedagogical documentation and planning.				
14. I inform children, families and other professionals about relevant aspects that require joint decisions, asking for their inputs.				
15. I create opportunities for children and families to communicate their needs, experiences, and preferences with other people and professionals within the community, who may provide services and inform decisions affecting them.				
16. I seek to establish collaboration with relevant services and organisations from the community, allowing children and their families to be informed and benefit from the best options available for them.				
17. I regularly discuss, with families and other professionals, the best options and the actions needed to support the inclusion of all children.				
18. I change plans, strategies, and actions, to better support children and families' needs, characteristics, and experiences.				
19. I can easily explain to parents or other professionals the meaning of "inclusion" and "inclusive education".				
20. I believe that all children, including those with disabilities, can learn.				
21. I am aware of the services and resources that are available, both at the education setting/system and the community, to assist children and their families (particularly those with special needs).				
22. I know about intellectual disabilities, and I am able to help children, their families, and cooperate with other families and professionals.				
23. I am informed about children's rights in general, and particularly the rights of persons with disabilities, and the legal instruments/documents binding them (e.g., United Nations Conventions).				
Here you can take notes about specific aspects that you consider can be relevant for further improvement or for discussion with families/other professionals.				

2. Knowledge

This section is dedicated to self-paced learning, and you will find some questions for further reflection.

2.1 Disability, diversity, typical and atypical child development

Disability and diversity

Disability, in general, is considered an umbrella term referring to impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Further, it may denote the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (for instance with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors, such as the environmental or personal factors. Particularly in the earliest ages, it may be difficult to identify an impairment and/or a disability, to mobilise adequate support.

One specific type of disabilities children can have **intellectual disabilities** (IDs). Children with IDs may have significant difficulties in intellectual functioning (for instance, in communicating, learning, or performing problem-solving tasks) or in adaptive behaviour (for instance, in certain social skills or in acquiring or managing routines). Children's IDs can be mild or severe – while children with milder forms of ID can gain some independence, if given appropriate support, children with more severe forms of ID may require additional support form adults (family and professionals), particularly in education settings and within the community. Nonetheless, multiple services and resources, implementing recommended practices based on scientific evidence, are available to support children with IDs and their families.

Closely linked with disability is **diversity**. Diversity generally refers to differences in values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, competences, knowledge, and individual life experiences. As such, diversity may also include differences in terms of **development**. For instance, a developmental delay may occur when a child is behind his or her peers in one or more areas or competences (for instance, emotional, cognitive, or physical development).

Respect for children's rights, unique characteristics, and competences, and thus for diversity, is therefore warranted. Legal documents and instruments proposed at international and European level, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, further described in this toolkit (please see section 2.6), are fundamental to ensure the wellbeing and inclusion of all children is a reality.

Time to reflect…

You may reflect on your own, with a partner/colleague or in a small group

Societies have become increasingly more complex and diverse. Based on your experience and perceptions, consider reflecting on the following aspects:

1. What types of **disabilities** have you witnessed or interacted with, more frequently?
2. What major changes have taken place in your setting/community that may be helping you to deal and support children with **intellectual disabilities**?
3. Can you recall a positive change in your setting/community, regarding how to deal with **diversit**y? What elements/resources were crucial to achieve change and success?

Child development

Child development is a dynamic and continuous process, and extremely tied to the notion of disability. In effect, the **development** of cognitive, emotional, and social abilities undergo profound changes during childhood, under the influences of both biological and environmental factors. It is of great importance to focus on the environmental factors that may act as facilitators or barriers to children's development and learning (such as policies, quality of materials, routines and interactions, professionals, and parents' attitudes) and may influence children's development and learning and social inclusion during early childhood and throughout life.

Therefore, families, teachers, and other professionals, such as health professionals, often track and measure **developmental milestones** since early childhood. Developmental milestones may include signs of physical, social, and cognitive progress that lead to mastery over the environment. Smiling, crawling, manipulating objects, walking, and talking are a few examples of developmental milestones that may provide valuable insight about children's development.

Most children develop skills in similar patterns, at similar times, attaining such milestones, as a function of the child's family, personal history, and environment. Therefore, developmental milestones are generally reported in age ranges. Thus, parents and teachers, for instance, may be concerned when a child is not yet walking or talking, especially if his or her peers have already acquired those competences. However, it is important to note that each child is unique, has his/her functioning, and develops at his/her own pace, depending on the characteristics of the environment and on the opportunities and supports that are provided to him/her.

Relatedly, distinctions between "**typical**" and "**atypical development**", and designations such as "**children with disabilities**" emerge. Typical development refers to the generic progress of a child, compared to peers of the same age, while atypical development occurs when the child appears to be behind or ahead of same-age children, in one or more areas or competences. The designation "children with disabilities" includes those children with physical, sensory, emotional, or **intellectual disabilities**, who may be often less involved or even excluded from an inclusive learning environment. These may be children who were born with a physical or psychological disability, or who have acquired an impairment or disability, because of an illness, an accident, or other adverse events. Consequently, these children may experience increased difficulties in seeing, hearing, or moving, and may have more difficulties in learning, or in learning in different ways from their peers.

When children are identified as having a “developmental delay”, “special needs”, “special education needs”, or “specific needs”, they normally require greater attention and additional support from caregivers, from families to professionals (such as teachers or other professionals from the communities in which they live). In some countries, greater attention and additional support may be provided in regular, but also in special education settings. Notably, early intervention may play an important role in supporting these children and their families.

Time to reflect…

You may reflect on your own, with a partner/colleague or in a small group

Have you ever become involved or witnessed a situation in which child development has become a subject of concern, requiring the involvement and joint action of different intervenients (such as the family, professionals from the education setting, professionals from the community)? Please consider what developmental aspect or educational need was addressed, how were difficulties overcome, and who or what resources were fundamental to support the child, his/her family, or professionals:

Developmental aspect/educational need: _____

Ways to overcome difficulties: _____

Who played an important role: _____

_____

Developmental aspect/educational need: _____

Ways to overcome difficulties: _____

Who played an important role: _____

_____

Developmental aspect/educational need: _____

Ways to overcome difficulties: _____

Who played an important role: _____

_____

When talking about disability and diversity, we must address the importance of **inclusion.** Inclusion refers to the right of ALL people to have access and participate in society, overcoming differences or difficulties through the provision of adequate support – *inclusion as principle*. Moreover, it also refers to the consideration of the diverse individual needs of all children and adults, by introducing the necessary changes,

adaptations, or additional supports to mitigate or eliminate exclusion factors – *inclusion as a process*.

When specifically considering the education context, terms such as "inclusive education" or "inclusive learning" gain relevance. They refer to the inclusion and teaching of ALL children, both in formal or non-formal learning environments, without regard to gender, physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, cultural, religious, or other characteristics and competences.

In education contexts, **teachers and other education professionals**, as key persons who systematically guide and facilitate children's learning within a specific formal or non-formal learning environment, play a crucial role to the inclusion of all children. Of course, also the **family**, as the main social unit in which children are raised, are fundamental and must closely collaborate with teachers, towards the inclusion of all children, and the promotion of an inclusive education. Notwithstanding, also the **"community"**, as a wider social group to which the child and family belong, must be considered as an important player to ensure inclusion and an inclusive education.

Time to reflect…

You may reflect on your own, with a partner/colleague or in a small group

> Consider families, teachers, and other professionals within your setting or community. What do these different intervenients, in general, already know about inclusion and inclusive education? What do they need to learn? Consider different actions you could undertake to better inform and share good practices with a) parents of children without disabilities, b) parents of children with disabilities, c) other professionals (such as a school coordinator, a policymaker from the local community, etc.). What would be relevant to share with all and each of these stakeholders?
>
> _____
> _____
> _____
> _____
> _____
> _____

In effect, it is the close **collaboration and partnerships** established between all these stakeholders (children, teachers, families, and other professionals/services from the community) that may contribute to effectively supporting all children, preparing them for life and for an active citizenship, in an increasingly demanding and inclusive society.

Time to reflect…

You may reflect on your own, with a partner/colleague or in a small group

As a parent or a professional (e.g., teacher), is your setting (i.e., the setting your child attends, or the setting where you work) inclusive? Please reflect on the following aspects:

- Are families, teachers and communities involved in children's learning and inclusion?
- Is the setting sensitive, celebrating differences and stimulating learning for all children?
- Does the setting promote the participation of all children?
- Does the setting promote cooperation between families (i.e., of children with and without special education needs and disabilities) and professionals?
- Does the setting promote opportunities for families, teachers, and other professionals to learn and benefit from an inclusive education?
- How can professionals and families of children without disabilities contribute to respecting the rights, wellbeing, and social inclusion of children with disabilities and their families?

Please register your thoughts and what could be done to improve the situations you reflected upon:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2.2 Benefits and methods of parent-teacher collaboration

In this chapter, we will present to you a summary of research around parent-teacher collaboration, the relations between families and schools, and the benefits related to children's learning as well as the educational process – both at school and at home (and other places of learning). If you are interested in learning more about the topic, we advise you to look into the resources quoted in the chapter as further reading.

Parental involvement and parental engagement

Parents are the primary educators of their children. This statement is a twofold one: on the one hand there is no need for research to prove that parents are the first to educate their children from birth, there is also a solid body of evidence showing that up to about 11 years of age parents have the largest impact of the learning outcomes of their children, even if it seems that the child is independent, and the parents have no

influence on her (Desforges, 2003.). This role is then taken over by the peer group, but parents remain the second most impacting group. Thus, for the educational and learning success of the individual child, parental attitudes are crucial.

In the next section we quote research around parental involvement and parental engagement, the first being an invitation 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. Although it is beyond the scope of this review, it is important to mention that in modern pedagogy that considers the child rights this can only be designed in a participatory way with regards to children as competent partners (see the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

The difference between involving and engaging parents can be described as below:

Involvement	**Engagement**
Who	
Parents	Parents and children + family and community
Responsibility	
School with teaching in centre	School, parents, learner with learning in centre
How	
School initiative, formal meetings	Flexibility of form and timing
Communication	
One-way school to home	Two-way, use of technology

(Salamon, 2017)

The benefits and types of parental engagement with schooling

In developed countries, the role which parents are expected to play in their children's schooling has changed significantly over the past 20-30 years. Parents are now pressured to be engaged, acting as "…quasi-consumer and chooser in educational 'marketplaces'" and "monitor and guarantor of their children's engagement with schooling" (Selwyn, 2011). Research evidence (Harris & Goodall, 2008, Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003) also shows it clearly that parental involvement results in better outcomes for young people. This makes it imperative to involve parents in schooling and this approach has gained widespread political traction in many European countries.

However, defining what is meant by parental involvement/engagement in schooling, the kind of interactions and methods most likely to benefit children, the role and responsibility of players, especially that of parents, teachers, and school heads, remain

somewhat controversial. Politicians, researchers, schools, teachers and parents' groups and children have failed to settle on shared definitions or priorities that sometimes lead to confusion. Although often presented as a "unified concept" parental involvement/engagement "has a range of interpretations, which are variously acceptable or unacceptable by different constituents" (Crozier, 1999: 219). Different stakeholders often use this fact in a way that leads to power struggles and tensions between different stakeholders (ibid 220), and sometimes also lead to some kind of a 'blame game'. As Harris and Goodall's 2008 study of parental interaction in schools illustrates, whilst parents were more likely to understand their involvement as support for their children and children, in turn, saw their parents as 'moral support', teachers viewed it as a "means to 'improved behaviour and support for the school'" (2008: 282). This leads to a split between expectations of schools towards parents and vice versa.

Epstein's (2002) classification of practice has been widely used in establishing a typography for parental involvement with school. It is important to take note of the fact that Epstein goes beyond the notion of involvement or engagement in learning of the individual child, but rather introduces the notion of partnership schools that are governed based on a mutual, balanced appreciation of home and school that has a major impact on establishing participatory leadership structures. Epstein's Framework (2002:6) defines six types of involvement:

*1. **Parenting**: practices that establish a positive learning environment at home*	*2. **Communicating**: parent-school communication about school programs and students´ progress*	*3. **Volunteering**: parents' participation and volunteering opportunities in school*
*4. **Learning at home**: parent and school communication regarding learning activities at home*	*5. **Decision making**: parent engagement in school decision making and governance*	*6. **Collaborating with the community**: parents' access to community resources that increase student learning opportunities*

It is important to state that these types have no hierarchy whatsoever, although they are often seen by some schools and teachers as levels of different value and formulating unfounded expectations towards parents whose need for engagement is different (Hamilton, 2013).

Goodall and Montgomery (2014) have argued for a more refined approach that moves interest away from parents' interactions with school generally towards a more specific focus on children's learning. They make a key distinction between involvement and engagement suggesting that the latter invokes a "feeling of ownership of that activity which is greater than is present with simple involvement" (2013: 399) and propose a continuum that moves from parental involvement with schooling to parental engagement with children's learning. This approach includes the recognition that

learning is not confined to school and the importance of supporting the learning of children inside and outside school. This approach can be particularly important in the case of parents (and of course children) from ethnic minorities, with low levels of education (and bad experiences with their own schooling) or those facing economic difficulty who, research has shown (ibid 400), are more likely to find involvement in school difficult but who nevertheless have strong commitments to their children's learning. This is a key issue to consider when designing mentoring models for parents in the Parent'r'us project.

Goodall (2017) urges for a paradigm shift towards a partnership that is based on the following principles formulated on the basis of reimagining Freire's banking model of education for the 21st century's reality:

1. School staff and parents participate in supporting the learning of the child.

2. School staff and parents value the knowledge that each brings to the partnership.

3. School staff and parents engage in dialogue around and with the learning of the child.

4. School staff and parents act in partnership to support the learning of the child and each other.

5. School staff and parents respect the legitimate authority of each other's roles and contributions to supporting learning.

According to Kendall (2018) these frameworks acknowledge the complex, dynamic nature of relationships between parents, school and children's learning and open meaningful opportunities for dialogue and re-negotiation of roles and responsibilities; they may not go beyond questioning the traditional paradigm of home-school relations. Re-imagining home-school relations needs to be based on reflection on the purpose of learning and going beyond the immediate and often narrow priorities of schools, based on testing and other policy accountabilities (Grant, 2009:14). Grant reminds us that "reframing children's lives outside school and family life purely in terms of an educational project" could lead to the "worst case scenario" of children being "continuously worked on by ambitious parents and teachers" (Grant, 2009:14). Grant goes on to suggest, many parents may choose, quite reasonably, to invest in insulating the boundaries between school and home life seeing "part of their role as protecting children from school's incursions into the home and ensuring that children socialise, play and relax as well as learn" (ibid).

This leads to the necessity to explore reasons of non-involvement or low levels of involvement with schooling when designing any intervention on parental empowerment.

The role of teachers in boosting parental engagement

According to Goodall (2018),

1. Usually, the school staff needs to take the first step towards parents, in order to successfully engage them.
2. Teachers need to assure parents that they are on the same side, both wanting the best for the child.
3. Teachers should avoid judging and labelling parents and be ready to understand the full picture. Every parent (and teacher) is different, everybody has different skills and strengths. When parents are handled as partners, not problems, their skills can be utilised and exploited for the benefit of the learning of the child.
4. Teachers have to realise that most of the parents are already doing a lot to help the learning of their child, these activities need to be recognized, praised and built on. Assuring parents that their efforts have a serious effect on the child's development can be a great encouragement and motivation for them to do more.
5. Teachers and the school staff have to be easily accessible and available for conversations, questions. Teachers should use a language that is understandable for each parent, jargon can be frightening, and it undermines the partner relationship.
6. Teachers should encourage a whole school approach; it helps when everybody is going in the same direction. (L. Ritók, 2017)

Bursting myths around impactful engagement

Desforges (2002) systematic review of the realised benefits of parental involvement on children's school attainment establishes the degree of significance of this. He found that whilst parents engaged in a broad range of activities to promote their children's educational progress (including sharing information, participating in events and school governance) **degree of parental involvement was strongly influenced by social class and the level of mothers' education**: **the higher the class and level of maternal educational qualification the greater the extent and degree of involvement.**

In addition, the review also noted that low levels of parental self-confidence, lack of understanding of 'role' in relation to education, psycho-socio and material deprivation also impacted negatively on levels of participation in school life **with some parents simply being "put off involvement by memories of their own school experience or by their interactions with their children's teachers or by a combination of both"** (2003:87), or in some cases the parents never attended formal education themselves and have no school experience (Ivanova, 2013, Ives & Lee, 2018).

The review concluded that whilst quality interactions with school (for example information sharing and participation in events and governance) are characteristic of positive parental involvement in education, a child's school attainment was more significantly bound up with a complex interplay of a much broader range of social and cultural factors, including "good parenting in the home…the provision of a secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulation, parent-child discussion, good models of constructive social and educational values and high aspirations relating to personal fulfilment and good citizenship (2002:5).

Identifying 'at-home good parenting' as the key factor in determining children's attainment the review found that this form of involvement "works indirectly on school outcomes by helping the child build a pro-social, pro-learning self-concept and high educational aspirations" (2003:87) and had a much greater impact on achievement than the effects of school in the early years of schooling in particular. Grouping these factors together as 'spontaneous parental involvement' the report contrasted the positive correlation with children's attainment they combined to secure, with the effects of "interventions that aim to enhance "spontaneous levels of engagement" (ibid 5).

Although the extent and variety of intervention activity, which included parenting programmes, home-school links and family and community education, was noted to be substantial the review was not able to find a positive correlation between these activities and attainment data and suggested they were "yet to deliver the achievement bonus that might be expected."

Price-Mitchell highlights an over-emphasis on school learning as the only, or priority, objective of home/school interactions. As such schools offer a 'mechanistic view' which separates educators and parents rather than connecting them with "educators see[ing] themselves as experts" in children's learning "rather than equals" (2009:5). According to her this creates hierarchical relationships and limits capacity to understand and develop partnerships that create new knowledge. (2009:8).

Price-Mitchell pays attention to the way that social capital circulates within the context of school and its potential to include or exclude parents from different social and cultural groups. Citing Santana & Schneider (2007) Mitchell-Price suggests that "lower income and ethnically diverse parents who traditionally have less access to resources for their children benefit greatly from social networks as a way of accruing benefits otherwise unavailable to them" (2009:19). Hamilton argues that this requires teachers to develop an 'outreach mentality' (2017:313) going beyond "promoting awareness among parents of rules and expectations" towards deep, reflexive exploration of their own socio-cultural positionality as a 'teacher' and representative of authority and taking responsibility for the agency they have in the processes and practices of home school interaction.

? Questions to check understanding – Quiz

Answer the following multiple-choice questions:

Q1: Parental involvement and parental engagement are synonyms

1. Yes
2. No

Q2: Epstein's six types of parental involvement represent a hierarchical scale from less to more involvement

1. Yes
2. No

Q3: Engaging with parents is only about learning at school

1. Yes
2. No

Q4: Goodall model is a partnership model for parents and schools

1. Yes
2. No

Q5: You can only properly engage with parents with high level of education

1. Yes
2. No

Now please check the correct answers and a brief justification for each:

Q1: **No**: Parental engagement and involvement are not synonyms, as described above in this section, parental engagement is a flexible process (in terms of ways and time), with parents and families working together for the benefit of the learners.

Q2: **No:** Despite the different value allocated to these types by schools and teachers, there is no hierarchy between the six types.

Q3: **No**: Engaging with parents means that the schools recognize and support the learning happening outside of the classroom.

Q4: **Yes:** Goodall describes in her model how schools and parents can work together for the benefit of the child.

Q5: **No**: Any parents and family can be engaged in their child´s learning and cooperate with the school, but schools need to adapt and to be flexible to accommodate the needs of the heterogeneous parent community around the school.

Methods of parent-teacher collaboration

Most parents want the school to help with some of their educator duties, mostly with 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 (academic or other skill based) 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.

In case you work with parents coming from difficult situations and have low levels of education, you will often experience that parents believe they cannot teach their children anything. For successful collaboration, this is the first thing you need to address. After all, they were the ones who taught them to walk and talk, the largest steps in any child's educational journey.

It is important to define what we mean by parents in this resource. The "Parents" are those with legal or quasi-legal custodianship, whether biological, adoptive, or foster parents of the child who attends a particular school. This term also includes other family members (uncles, sisters, grandparents) whose involvement may be important to the child and play a role in educating them.

Do's and Don'ts of parent-school relations

Don't	**Do**
Assume you can make change overnight	Remember that terms like 'disabled' or 'lagging behind' describe processes rather than identities – their displacement is something that has happened to them rather than who they are
Confuse the description 'disabled' or 'lagging behind' with a person's identity	Think about how the vision & values of your school pay attention to including families raising children with disabilities – how well embedded are your values?
Make assumptions about families' previous experiences of education or schooling	Provide forums where families raising children with disabilities may share their stories if they wish to and stay focused on contexts for supporting children's learning
Oblige families to share their stories of tackling the disability of their child	Consider how welcoming your school buildings and outside spaces are for families and carers of children with disabilities?
Assume terminology and definitions are stable across international borders	Review the models of home school interaction that you currently work

	with and consider how you would like to develop these to increase partnership working with parents
Assume your professional knowledge and experience to date will give you all the answers	Find out about education systems in other countries as this will help you to understand experiences and expectations support family-school collaboration opportunities better
	Take the time to find out what the families' expectations and experiences are
	Consider what support services (e.g., case managers) you can draw on in school to support good communication, how can you use other parents in your community to facilitate this?
	Find out about local resources that you can signpost families to e.g., libraries, community centres, free wi-fi zones, health and mental health support services
	Think about how you currently communicate with parents – is it paper-based? Digital? To what extent does your approach take account of parents' literacy/digital literacy experiences? How might you need to develop or change your approach?
	Consider how you can facilitate peer to peer support between parents
	Build third spaces between home and school in which parents and teachers can come together in equal partnership to support young people's learning and provide opportunities for building community cohesion
	Be prepared to advocate for families raising children with disabilities
	Accept that you may not already have all the skills you need to work effectively with families raising children with disabilities, be ready to extend or cross professional boundaries and develop new areas of professional expertise

From non-participation to engagement

To design and evaluate methods of parent-teacher collaboration, we are using a model developed by Sherry Arnstein (1969) on citizen involvement called the Ladder of Participation as a starting point. Levels 1 to 3 are defined as non-participation, 4 and 5 are considered involvement and levels 6 to 8 are considered engagement.

? Where on the ladder – Quiz

Please read each of the following sentences and identify number of the corresponding level of the ladder of parent participation (from 1 to 8):

a) The school leader holds a meeting for all parents at the beginning of the school year
b) Parents are asked to provide coffee and cake for the jubilee event of the school
c) Parents decide to organise a fundraiser event on the occasion of the school jubilee, using the school premises
d) The school leader chooses a parent to represent the school at a municipal national holiday commemoration
e) A parent is invited to all teacher meetings, but not offered any preparation or preliminary information before the meetings
f) The school board consists of an equal number of representatives of teachers, parents and students, and makes decisions about school budget, events, the organisation of the school day, curriculum, etc.

Now, please check the correct answers:

a) Level 1, because the parents don't get to have any say in the timing, the agenda, the venue, they are just there to listen.
b) Level 4, because the parents are assigned a task, and are informed why it is important to the school, but they do not get to have a part in the organizing.
c) Level 7, because parents are the decision makers and the organizers of this activity.
d) Level 2, because the parent is not there to take part in decision making, they are simply decoration to an event that does not benefit them in any way.
e) Level 3, because they do not get to make any decisions on the agenda, or can prepare for the meeting to actively engage in an informed way, they are just tokens.
f) Level 8, because the decision making is shared in an equal way.

 **Time to reflect…**

Behaviour, activities, and practices in a family that I think contribute to a child's development and ability to learn at home and at school:	
Relationships with my child	**Examples:** • Daily conversation about everyday events; • Expressions of affection; • Family discussion of books, newspapers, magazines, television programmes; • Family visits to libraries, museums, historical sites, cultural activities; and • Encouragement to expand vocabulary. **Add your own practices ideas**:
Routine of family life	**Examples:** • Formal study time at home; • A daily routine that includes time to eat, sleep, play, work, study and read; A quiet place to study and read; • Family interest in hobbies, games, activities of educational value. **Add your own practices ideas**:

Family expectations and supervision	**Examples:** • Priority given to schoolwork and reading over television, videogames • Expectation of punctuality; • Parental expectation that children do their best; • Concern for correct and effective use of language; • Parental monitoring of children's peer group; • Monitoring and joint analysis of watching TV and computer gaming; • Parental knowledge about a child's progress in school and personal growth. **Add your own practices ideas**:
Togetherness	**Examples:** • Preparing meals together; • Dedicated time to playing together; • Working side-by-side; • Helping your children with homework **Add your own practices ideas**:
Write about how you as a parent feel about these practices If you are not a parent, write about your feelings as a professional. If you are a parent, ask your child(ren) about their feelings	**As a parent I feel (**you might complement your writing with some emoticons!):  **As a professional I feel** (you might complement your writing with some emoticons!):  **As a child I feel**: ask him/her and write what he/she says 
Choose one practice from the lists above and think about its	**Positive effects on a child:**

	Positive effects on family life:
Some of my concerns or doubts about how a disadvantaged family is contributing to their children's development and learning are: 1. 2. 3. **I can share these concerns for advice with:** 1. 2. 3.	

Conflicts and how to deal with them

Conflict has been viewed in different ways throughout history. This fundamentally determines the outcome of conflicts. Is conflict a phenomenon to be avoided? Or is it a natural part of life that is inevitable. Or is it a positive resource that can foster progress?

Conflict manifests itself in every human activity and relationship we have. It is an inevitable inherent part of interpersonal relationships. Conflict exists not only between persons, but also within ourselves, leading for example to anxiety, nervousness, impatience. For example, Sigmund Freud's theory is based on intrapsychic conflicts, in which the conscious self, aware of the dangers and bound by norms, comes into conflict with the unconscious self, which is not concerned with reality.

One type if conflict is when the internal forces that determine our actions are opposing and we have to choose (Kunos, 2005), for instance, between:

a) one of two good possibilities,

b) two bad things, or

c) a positive and a negative alternative.

In addition, role conflicts experienced over a prolonged period of time may also exist. However, as the third approach highlights, conflict is not only a problem but also an opportunity. Finding common ground is a step forward, and both parties can benefit and improve.

Conflict and me - Attitudes and conflict management

The parties' attitudes to conflict, as mentioned above, fundamentally determine the outcome of conflicts. Our attitudes towards conflict and our resolution mechanisms are fundamentally determined by our personality, beliefs, values, feelings about the issue (how emotionally involved we are), our worldview, our attitude towards others, our attitude towards the other party.

The development of self-esteem is an important goal, as increased self-esteem helps prevent conflicts from escalating, as people with healthy self-esteem are less likely to react defensively and are better able to see the other person's point of view.

1. We need to critically analyse our views of ourselves,
2. Increase our positive self-esteem (if necessary).

Depending on the extent to which the parties in conflict want to assert their own interests and seek to take into account the other's point of view, cooperation can (or not) be established.

Cooperation

One way to solve conflicts is through cooperation. On the one hand, the parties put aside their personal disagreements for the sake of the goal because they know that cooperation is necessary. On the other hand, they trust each other and trust that the results of cooperation are greater than what they could achieve on their own. Remember, the parties have different resources, which in this case support and complement each other. There is a solution for complementary strategies:

- Competitor-applicant (when there is a dominating part and a more adaptive one)

- Compromise-compromise (when both parts give-and-take, for instance by giving up something to reach a mutually accepted decision)

- Cooperative-cooperative (when both parts cooperate, for instance even when different goals remain)

- Avoid-avoid (when both parts avoid, not satisfying either their own or the other party's concerns)

For non-complementary strategies, solution is only possible if one or both parties change their initial basic strategy. Many unnecessary conflicts can be avoided simply by using clear, precise written and/or verbal communication. A single lost email or an unread message can lead to failed plans and finger-pointing. Assumptions about what others already know, think, or intend can cause anger or worse. Some people argue just because they want to be heard. Simply being a good listener can be enough to inspire trust and solve hurt feelings.

What skills are needed to manage conflict? We share a few examples:

- Effective communication
- Emotional intelligence
- Empathy
- Ability to let it go
- Prioritisation
- Patience
- Etc.

Characteristics of a “tit-for-tat” person/strategy (i.e., assuming a person is more successful if he/she cooperates with another person):

1. Friendly: never initiates competition
2. Reactive: response depends on opponent's strategy
3. "Provocative": if the opponent turns competitive, he will retaliate
4. Forgiving: if his opponent returns to cooperate, he does too (non-angry)
5. Interpretable: simple, transparent, understandable to the opponent

2.3 Myths and truths about inclusive education and the inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities

Like in many other subjects, there can be myths or preconceived notions about disability, children with intellectual disabilities, and their inclusion in education and community settings.

Time to reflect…

Before you proceed, please take a moment to consider and write down what first comes to your mind when you think about disability, children with intellectual disabilities and their inclusion in society (for example, in education settings, community activities, and services). Don’t take too long, just write down the first thoughts that come to your mind. Next, please reflect on your own, with a partner/colleague or in a small group, about your own experiences that may confirm or contradict your initial thought.

1. Immediate thought(s):

_____
_____
_____

Experiences (that confirm or contradict):_____

_____
_____
_____

2. Immediate thought(s):

_____
_____
_____

Experiences (that confirm or contradict):_____
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_____
_____

3. Immediate thought(s):

_____
_____
_____

Experiences (that confirm or contradict):_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Immediate thought(s):

_____
_____
_____

Experiences (that confirm or contradict):_____
_____
_____
_____

To help us reflect on common thoughts and ideas regarding disability, children with intellectual disabilities, and their inclusion in education and community settings, we will share some general statements regarding these issues. While some of them are true and aligned with existing evidence, others correspond to myths.

1. *Inclusion only concerns children with disabilities.* **This corresponds to a MYTH!** The concept of inclusion was originally used in relation to disability, although nowadays it goes far beyond, as a response to

increasingly complex and diverse societies. It refers to the inclusion and teaching of ALL children in formal or non-formal learning environments without regard to gender, physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, cultural, religious, or other characteristics.

2. *Children with disabilities have no competences or experience to participate in regular education and/or community settings.* **This corresponds to a MYTH!** From an early age, children with disabilities have competences to participate, to some extent, in educational contexts and other community activities. They may need to receive adequate support to have access and participate on an equal basis with others and reach their full potential.

3. *For a child with disability to be included, guaranteeing his/her presence is enough.* **This corresponds to a MYTH!** It is not sufficient for a child to attend a classroom or an out-of-school activity, for example, if he/she does not participate and receive adequate support. In addition to guaranteeing **access** (providing children access to a wide range of learning opportunities, activities, settings, and environments) it is essential to ensure **participation** (providing children with individualised and adequate support and using diverse approaches to learning, allowing them to fully participate and become involved in play and learning activities with their peers) and **supports** (ensuring that broader aspects such as professional development, incentives for inclusion, and opportunities for communication and collaboration among families, professionals and existing supports from the community, are present).

4. *Children with and without disabilities both benefit from inclusion: it contributes to acquiring new skills, self-confidence, power, and enjoyment.* **This is TRUE and aligned with scientific evidence!** Inclusion is described as bringing benefits for all children, such as increased social relationships and networks, increased assertiveness, self-control, and empathy, as well as increased respect for diversity, leading to more inclusive communities.

5. *Children with disabilities are poorly treated in inclusive education contexts.* **This corresponds to a MYTH!** Inclusive education contexts are respectful of all and each child's needs, competences, and interests. In these settings, all children are guaranteed access and opportunities to participate, receiving adequate support, considering their unique characteristics.

6. *Inclusive education depends solely on the teacher.* **This corresponds to a MYTH!** Inclusive education must be a shared concern, responsibility

and commitment among families, professionals, and policymakers. Only through a joint reflection, collaboration and action can we guarantee the improvement of inclusive education policies and practices and ensure high-quality educational opportunities for all.

7. *Inclusive education is a simplistic one-size-fits-all approach that benefits all children.* **This corresponds to a MYTH!** Inclusive education is never simplistic nor a one-size-fits-all approach. Only if it allows flexibility and is adjusted to the individual needs of each child and his/her family, it can benefit all intervenients. In an inclusive and child-friendly setting, accessible, diverse, and differentiated learning methods are necessary to support the needs of all children, including children with disabilities. Offering diversity of learning to methods, materials, and resources, gives children the opportunity to learn in the way that fits them best, enables all children to participate, and experience a sense of belonging. These principles are consistent with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (to know more about UDL, please go to section 2.4).

8. *When both children with and without disabilities experience inclusive education, it is mostly children with disabilities who benefit from inclusive practices.* **This corresponds to a MYTH!** Promoting inclusive education benefits not only children with disabilities, but also children without disabilities, who become, for example, more aware and respectful of all children's needs, learn to accept others and to recognize that each person has unique abilities and competences and develop their cognitive, social, and emotional competences.

9. *Collaboration between families and professionals is a key component to the success of inclusive education and for children to acquire new competences.* **This is TRUE and aligned with scientific evidence!** Ensuring inclusive education through a straight collaboration between parents and professionals is fundamental to align expectations, efforts and a shared commitment that lastly benefits children in their cognitive, social and emotional development.

10. *Quality inclusive education is too expensive.* **This corresponds to a MYTH!** There is evidence that lower costs are associated with more inclusive models as compared to traditional forms of special education provision. Also, adapting the school system towards inclusive education does not necessarily mean a lot of resources, it can be cultivated, for example, by engaging in awareness campaigns for teachers, parents and students, maximising available resources and by redesigning training, practices and support for all professionals at school (for example, managing group work and cooperative learning).

11. *The inclusion of children with disabilities in the community (for example, out-of-school activities) is impossible.* **This corresponds to a MYTH!** Guaranteeing the inclusion of children with disability in community activities is not only possible, as is easier when we count with the support of professionals and other significant people (for example, family members, friends, neighbours, other parents/caregivers). Multiple aspects can and should be taken into account when thinking about supporting a child with ID to participate in his/her community, for example, the child's interests, characteristics and needs, which activities in the local community match them, which type of support the child would need, and communication and collaboration with the person responsible for the desired activity(ies).

12. *The participation of children with disabilities in community activities is essential for their development, learning, well-being and social competences.* **This is TRUE and aligned with scientific evidence!** When we recognize and take advantage of local community opportunities, by giving the child the chance to effectively participate in such activities, we are providing a way for his/her unique interests, skills, and personality to find common ground with other peers! Moreover, we are also creating the conditions to foster significant relationships outside the family, bringing more people into the child's life.

In the past decades, there has been a shift regarding the way we face disabilities and persons with disabilities, highly driven by developments in research and social movements in this field. However, people do not always have the same understanding about what inclusive practices are. Being aware of what constitutes a myth and what is aligned with existing evidence may thus help deconstruct predefined thoughts and beliefs, which is fundamental to guarantee the rights and quality of life of children with SENDs and their families. Based on this, we now propose a reflection.

Time to reflect…

You may reflect on your own, with a partner/colleague or in a small group

Do you recognise any of these myths within your school, community, or even your family? How do you think they can impact the lives of children with and without intellectual disabilities, parents, teachers, other professionals, and people from your community? How can parents and professionals help overcome such myths? Please write your reflections.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Building inclusive contexts

Inclusion is about changing our core beliefs, attitudes and behaviours about diversity, ability, and contribution, and making practical and effective changes in day-to-day school and community activities, so that all children may participate, have fun, learn, and develop. Parents of children with and without intellectual disabilities, teachers, families, school professionals and authorities, children with and without intellectual disabilities, health services, community associations and services, and others must all be involved in contributing for an inclusive community and learning environment.

One important fact that is essential we all acknowledge and accept is that all children are different and have an equal right to education, no matter their ability or background, as set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and other relevant documents at European and World level.

While all children can learn, they may not learn the same things at the same time, and achieve the same results, and that is completely natural. Nowadays, it is worldwide recognized, accepted, and established that all children need to learn in a variety of ways, and that they are active participants in their learning.
The **Universal Design for Learning** (UDL) clearly and intentionally address this, by being an educational framework that approaches learning and teaching in a way that gives all children equal opportunities to learn, develop and succeed. The goal of UDL is to promote flexibility and diversity in the curriculum and classroom practices, by establishing three principles:

- *Multiple means of **engagement*** to tap into learners' interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn (for example, suggest activities that are culturally or socially relevant to students, vary duration and sequence of the activities, and give students the possibility to make choices)
- *Multiple means of **representation*** to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge (for example, share information in different formats – visual, auditory, tactile, kinaesthetic)
- *Multiple means of **expression*** to provide learners alternatives forms for expressing and demonstrating what they know (for example, alternatives for using pen and/or pencil, giving an oral report, making a video, doing a group project)

The implementation of classroom practices based on the UDL implies a flexible and personalised approach by teachers, in the way they involve and motivate students in learning situations, present information and operationalize students' evaluation. Considering the diversity of students in the classroom and that each student learns in a unique way, only an intentional, proactive, and flexible curricular approach and offering accessible, diverse, and differentiated learning methods, materials, and resources makes sense and can benefit all.

Many schools and communities are actively creating inclusive and learning-friendly environments. However, there are no quick solutions or a one-size-fits-all formula. It's really a self-discovery process, where one is always learning, discovering new ways of promoting the participation of all children in every context, sharing ideas, strategies, and resources. Creating strong and solid partnerships with families, teachers, school, and community organisations, whilst seeking support and accountability from policymakers, will help to facilitate the process and to overcome eventual challenges that may arise along the way.

The **benefits of inclusion** are numerous and include not only children with ID, but their peers without ID, families, teachers, school, other professionals, and communities. An inclusive society, where all can actively participate and contribute (in their own way and according to their unique abilities and competences), is a more conscious, aware, respectful, efficient, harmonious, and just society.

Some families and teachers of children without ID may have concerns about the inclusion of children with ID in regular schools and communities' activities, fearing that other children without ID would be jeopardised. Research has consistently suggested that the inclusion of children with ID benefits children without ID in many areas. For example, children may reinforce their cognitive competences and their learning when they interact and cooperate with children with ID, they reinforce their social and emotional competences when they learn new ways of connecting with children that have different characteristics and necessities. Further, they develop, from an early age, the understanding that each person has unique characteristics, abilities, and competences, increasing the sense that all children must be respected, accepted and valued.

 **Time to reflect…**

You may reflect on your own, with a partner or in a small group

How can you contribute to the reinforcement of positive beliefs, attitudes, and practices towards inclusion and inclusive education?

What? (what actions need to be taken?)	Who? (who needs to be involved?)
Where? (for example, at school, community activities)	When? (for example, a special date, during schools days)
How? (for example, through professional development, awareness campaigns)	Resources (which resources we will need – material, human, etc.)
Other notes:	

Tips to promote inclusion and inclusive education in your community (if you're a parent):

- Get to know the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other relevant documents for the inclusion of children with ID and their families;

- Get involved with parents' association at your school and/or your community, get to know the main topics and necessities that they are working on, find if there are children with ID at your school and community and how is their inclusion going;

- Raise awareness about the importance of inclusion and inclusive education by talking with people about it;

- Support campaigns and projects that raise awareness and promote the inclusion of children with disability (for example, in social media, newspaper and activities in your school and community)

- Give an example. The way we act, speaks louder than our words. Your daily actions towards children with ID and their families will reinforce an inclusive society.

Tips to promote inclusion and inclusive education in your community (if you're a teacher):

- Get to know the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other relevant documents for the inclusion of children with ID and their families;

- Invest in your professional development (for example, about Universal Design for Learning and its application in the classroom, about creating partnerships and collaborating with families of children with ID);

- Reflect about your classroom practices: are they inclusive? What are your main concerns about having a child with ID in your classroom? What challenges do you may face? How can you assure a learning-friendly environment for all? What resources do you need to mobilise?;

- Promote a teachers' reflection group focused on the practices and resources needed to promote inclusive education;

- Promote and/or support awareness campaigns with school authorities supporting inclusive education.

2.4 Multiple inclusion and Universal Design for Learning

Multiple Inclusion

Inclusion in education has been a hot topic all over Europe. There have been various attempts to develop inclusion strategies for different groups, such as for the inclusion of disabled students, newly arrived migrants, those with special needs and others. MultInclude, an Erasmus+ project, had focused on the multiple inclusion needs of students having in mind the completion of secondary education and continuation of studies at tertiary level as a goal. In short, what we were aiming at is educating lifelong learners by catering for the individual inclusion needs of each student.

A student is successfully included, if they can reach their full potential, enjoy being at school, and at a certain point become happy particle physicists, musicians or bakers depending on their desires. Their career choice is appreciated by the community, and they have a drive and skills for developing their abilities later in life.

Education policy has defined some wonderful goals, providing quality inclusive education to everybody being one of them. We can fill whole libraries with answers to what we mean by quality, and we will still not have a clear definition, but it is not totally straightforward what we mean by inclusive. Some schools call themselves inclusive if anybody with a disability can thrive there or if they are prepared to welcome newly arrived migrants. But does this same school have answers to the inclusion needs of others? Real inclusion in education is close to fully individualised education, and it can only become a reality if several factors come together in a good constellation.

Students have always been diverse, but in the digital age diversity is wider than before. We also need to take it into consideration that the goal of education is being redefined. The world needs less and less obedient, uniform people – their jobs are the ones to be taken over by robots. We need people with diverse skills and mindsets, but this is not the only change from the original goal of mass education. In old times the goal was to provide everybody with some basic skills for the assembly line or the cashier at the bank, today we don't even have an agreement on what basic skills are. We even less need to assimilate people to an organisation's requirements. Inclusion efforts need to aim for preserving diversity of skills, knowledge, and mindsets.

The most important argument against home-schooling and unschooling is that these children will not have the opportunity to learn living in a diverse community. Most families have a circle of friends who are not very different from them, so this is true to a certain extent. But those sending their children to school are rarely or never confronted with this goal of education. Professionals need to have families on board to understand that while academic skills can be developed later, even at home by the computer, the learning outcomes of working together with very different people are extremely valuable. And this is just one element why parents and families need to be involved and empowered to understand inclusion for success.

We can set the goal of reducing early school leaving or having a certain percentage of people in tertiary education as the EU has done, but at the end of the day we need to educate people who do not lose their appetite for and joy of learning. Thus, inclusive education must start early. Any intervention, programme or project in early childhood education or primary school that protects and further boosts the joy of learning, a phenomenon in every child before they start formal education, should be celebrated as an inclusive attempt. (This also includes parental empowerment programmes as parents have the largest impact on learning outcomes until age 11-12, regardless of the education level of parents.) Strong foundations in basic skills and self-esteem in this period of life also protects children in later school life, even if higher levels are not as inclusive.

Education inflation is another phenomenon that may prevent inclusion. In many countries in Europe and beyond there is a still growing body of academic content that children need to show their knowledge of before they can focus on their personal pathways. In a really inclusive system students need to be offered a high level of flexibility also in requirements and they need to be protected from failure in areas they have little to no affiliation for. You can find examples of this among our case studies.

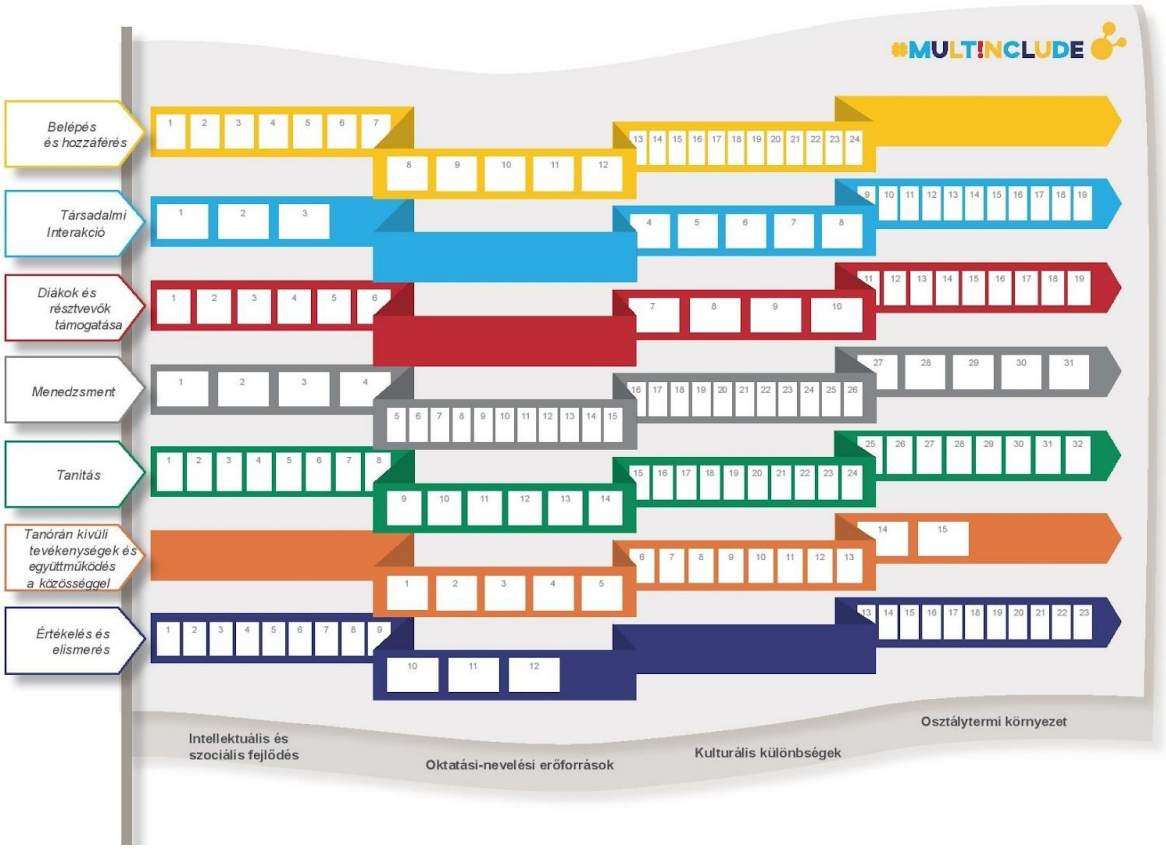
How can this happen in a school with large classes? The answer is in redefining the role of teachers and making them forget the idea of teaching anything. They need to become learning facilitators.

The last factor I want to mention here is the need for collaboration between formal, informal and non-formal education. An open school policy is imperative to achieve real inclusion. There will always be students whose needs cannot be catered for without opening up the school and reaching out to other educators for support be it an NGO, another school, a local business or parents/grandparents. This cannot happen without a certain level of autonomy in school leadership. In an ideal situation this is offered by school policy and leaders are supported in this role also by training, but our recent research shows that very often this can be achieved even in over-centralised, less flexible systems if you have the right professionals in place.

For some readers it may seem like a utopia. However, we need to make all possible efforts to make it a reality for the goals mentioned earlier: SDG4, providing quality, inclusive education. This is actually becoming a reality in more and more places, so we mustn't rule it out as a utopia. It is possible.

Developing local school inclusion strategies largely depends on the mindset and competences of school professionals, and on a leadership vision. But first and foremost, there is a need for a diagnosis to explore where the school is, and what areas need further development. In the frame of MultInclude, a diagnostic tool, in the form of a scoring matrix was developed so that schools can use it for this purpose. It was piloted in over 60 schools across Europe supporting schools to evaluate their inclusion strategies and practices along the lines of various dimensions. The website also provides a collection and analysis of practices for inspiration to support schools in improving their inclusiveness.

The questionnaire for the matrix consists of 163 items and it was developed along the lines of the following 7 dimensions and 4 domains:



Dimensions:

1. Admission and Access
2. Social Interaction
3. Student and Participant Support
4. Management
5. Teaching
6. Extracurricular activities and Community Outreach
7. Assessment and Recognition

Domains:

1. Intellectual and Social Development
2. Educational Resources
3. Cultural Differences
4. Classroom Environment

By using this matrix, your school, or a group of teachers from the school can explore the areas the school is currently scoring low and decide how important the given area is for

your school. It is a snapshot that can then be used as a starting point for developing or improving internal strategies and processes as well as to decide on action for improvement. For example, if a school identifies a need to update their management or teaching practices in the domain of catering for cultural differences, they can develop a plan for that.

The MultInclude scoring matrix has proven to be a useful tool for even the most inclusive schools to evaluate and subsequently improve their institutional inclusion strategies. There are always new challenges and room for further improvement. As the tool has been designed to cover a very wide range of inclusion aspects, it leads to a more systemic thinking in areas that have been covered by inclusion practice, but not yet by strategy. You can use the English version after registering in the MultInclude learning community, but it can also be used on paper, using the downloadable resources available here https://multinclude.eu/activities/impact/inclusion-matrix-toolkit/

Universal Design for Learning

Universal design for learning (UDL) is a teaching approach that works to accommodate the needs and abilities of all learners and eliminates unnecessary hurdles in the learning process. This is a perfect approach, with plenty of literature and tools available, to design education delivery with a multiple inclusion mindset.

UDL is aiming at developing a flexible learning environment in which information is presented in multiple ways, students engage in learning in a variety of ways, and students are provided options when demonstrating their learning. It is based on the definition and 7 principles of universal design (UD) (Connell et al., 1997).

According to the Center for Universal Design, UD is "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design." To narrow the scope, this definition can be modified, and has been modified for UDL.

Historically, accessible design has been primarily about court-enforced compliance with regulations. The regulations are intended to eliminate certain physical barriers that limit the usability of environments for people with disabilities. It has focused on compliance with state or local building codes. These typically were based on the American National Standards Institute's requirements. With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 and the subsequent development of the ADA Accessibility Guidelines, accessible design has focused more recently on satisfying these minimum technical criteria to allow most people with disabilities to use most of the designed environment (Salmen, 1996).

Universal design generally is a market-driven process intended to create environments that are usable by all people. While considerations for people with disabilities are certainly necessary for universal design, they are not sufficient when planning and designing for the whole population. Accommodating the needs and wishes of everyone – e.g., children, the elderly, women and men – is also necessary for universal design. Acknowledging this greater inclusiveness, in the mid-1990s the Center for Universal Design in Raleigh, NC asked ten leading advocates to identify the underlying

performance requirements of universal design. The resulting Principles of Universal Design (Connell, et al, 1997), developed through funding provided by the U.S. Department of Education's National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), has since become the internationally referenced definition.

The 7 Principles of UD:

1. Equitable Use (The design is useful and markable to people with diverse abilities)

Guidelines:

a) Provide the same means of use for all users: identical whenever possible, equivalent when not
b) Avoid segregation or stigmatising any users
c) Provisions for privacy, security and safety should be equally available to all users
d) Make the design appealing to all users

2. Flexibility in Use (The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities)

Guidelines:

a) Provide choice in methods of use
b) Accommodate right- or left -handed access and use
c) Facilitate the user`s accuracy and precision
d) Provide adaptability to user`s pace

3. Simple and Intuitive Use (Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of user`s experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level)

Guidelines:

a) Eliminate unnecessary complexity
b) Be consistent with user expectations and intuition
c) Accommodate a wide range of literacy and language skills
d) Arrange information consistent with its importance
e) Provide effective prompting and feedback during and after task completion

4. Perceptible Information (The design communicate necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user`s sensory abilities)

Guidelines:

a) Use different modes (pictorial, verbal, tactile) for redundant presentation of essential information
b) Provide adequate contrast between essential information and its surroundings

c) Maximise “legibility” of essential information
d) Differentiate elements in ways that can be described (i.e., make it easy to give instructions or directions)
e) Provide compatibility with a variety of techniques or devices used by people with sensory limitations

5. Tolerance for Error (The design minimises hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions)

Guidelines:

a) Arrange elements to minimise hazards and errors; most used elements, most accessible, hazardous elements eliminated, isolated, or shielded
b) Provide warnings of hazards and errors
c) Provide fail safe features
d) Discourage unconscious action in task that require vigilance

6. Low Physical Effort (The design can be used efficiently and comfortable and with a minimum of fatigue)

Guidelines:

a) Allow user to maintain a neutral body position
b) Use reasonable operating force
c) Minimise repetitive actions
d) Minimise sustained physical effort

7. Size and Space for Approach and Use (Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user`s body size, posture, or mobility)

Guidelines:

a) Provide a clear line of sights to important elements for any seated or standing user
b) Make reach to all components comfortable for any seated or standing user
c) Accommodate variations in hand and grip size
d) Provide adequate spaces for the use of assistive devices or personal assistance

UDL is - in a way - also a market-driven initiative, but by the nature of education the “market” is far more complex with education institutions playing the role of providers as well as advisors, and parents and children together acting as “customers” with the best interest of the child in the focus. UDL is based on the following:

- Incorporating UD principles enhances an inclusive learning environment.
- Designing a course to accommodate a wider variety of needs may eliminate potential learning barriers or unnecessary learning obstacles.

- Providing students with multiple means of perceiving, comprehending, and expressing their learning allows students to engage with the material in a way that most benefits them, and also encourages students to engage with material to improve in areas in which their skills are not as strong.

The most important element is providing choices, but it does not mean changing learning objectives or final requirements, but supporting the learning process as well as possible. Implementing UDL means that the learning environment / education institution is

- Providing Options for Perception - Based on the premise that learners access information differently, this principle means providing flexible and multiple ways to present information.
- Providing Options for Expression - Since learners vary in their abilities to demonstrate their learning in different ways, this principle means providing flexible and multiple ways to allow students to express their knowledge or demonstrate their skills.
- Providing Options for Comprehension - Students are motivated to learn for different reasons and vary in the types of learning activities that keep them engaged. This means providing multiple ways for engaging in course activities.

2.5 Child rights, parents' rights and duties, rights of people with disabilities

Children with disabilities have the same needs and the same rights as all children. They have the right to:

- Life
- Nutrition
- An adequate standard of living
- Health care
- Have a house
- Receive inclusive education
- Take part in decision-making that affects them
- Express their opinion
- Be protected from violence / abuse
- Employment rights

Time to reflect…

- Why is it so important to protect children's rights?
- Can you think of other rights?

- Who can protect human rights?

Inclusive participation

Inclusion means that all children have the same opportunities:

- Play and learn
- Take part in community life
- Build relationships with important people
- Feel that they belong

When a child is included, he/she:

- Has the same educational opportunities and choices as other students
- Has opportunities to do things he/she likes in the community
- Succeeds because his/her parents have high expectations of him/her
- Can rely on his/her strengths
- Can express his/her needs
- Is supported by a team of parents and professionals working together

Time to reflect…

- Why is it important for a child to be included?
- For whom is it important to be included (for the child, the parents, the professionals, the community, the peers?)
- Can you think of any inclusive environments?

Parents' Rights and Duties

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly defines the rights and duties of parents (and guardians) as the solely responsible people for the upbringing - including education - of their children, and thus this is the first universal document applicable in all European countries (and all other countries except in the US as well). It also states that the States that have ratified the Convention are obliged to support parents in this by means they require. This includes establishing and maintaining appropriate formal education institutions, support services, but also financial support, parental leave and similar means. The aim is to ensure rights of children defined in the Convention that includes the right to quality, inclusive education for all children, and support for children with disabilities.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (please see section 2.6 for further information) emphasized the need to ensure the rights, non-discrimination, and equality of children with disabilities and their parents are met. Further, in the United States, for instance, the achievements gained under the Education for the Handicapped Act (Public Law 94-142) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Public Law 101-476) were clearly strengthened by the IDEA Amendments of 1997 (Public Law 105-17). A fundamental provision of these special education laws is the right of all parents to participate in the educational decision-making process. Therefore, all parents, not only those with children with disabilities, must be aware of their important role in promotion inclusion and guaranteeing the rights of all children and their families.

The right to a free, appropriate public education
The right to a complete explanation of the procedural safeguards available under IDEA
The right to an independent educational evaluation
The right to provide "informed consent" (meaning you understand and agree in writing to the evaluation and educational program decisions for your child). Your consent is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time.
The right to disagree with decisions made by the school
The right to participate in the development of your child's Individualised Education Program (IEP) or, in the case of a child younger than four years old, the development of an Individualised Family Service Plan (IFSP).
The right to be kept informed about your child's progress at least as often as parents of children who do not have disabilities
Join a parent organisation. In addition to giving parents an opportunity to share knowledge and gain support, a parent group can be an effective force on behalf of your child

Parents' Responsibilities

Develop a partnership with the school and share relevant information about your child's education and development (in case a parent decides to educate their children partly at a school).
Ask for clarification of any aspect of the program that is unclear to you.
Make sure you understand the program specified in the IEP or IFSP before agreeing to it or signing the form. Take the IEP or IFSP form home so you can review it before you sign it. You have 10 school days in which to make a decision.
Consider and discuss with your child's teacher how your child if it would be beneficial for your child to be included in the regular school activities program and how it can happen. Do not forget areas such as lunch, recess, art, music, and physical education.
Monitor your child's progress and periodically ask for a report. If your child is not progressing, discuss this with the teacher and determine whether the program should be modified. If the report does not fit your view on your child's progress, you can ask the teacher for modifying it.
Discuss with the school any problems that occur with your child's assessment, placement, or educational program. If you are uncertain about how to resolve a problem, you can turn to the advocacy agencies found in most states for the guidance you need to pursue your case.
Keep records. There may be many questions and comments about your child that you will want to discuss, as well as meetings and phone conversations you will want to remember.
Become engaged with the school and have shape the programme(s) they offer to ensure it is appropriate for your child as well as for others.

Time to reflect…

You may reflect on your own, with a partner/colleague or in a small group

Why is it so important to protect children's rights?	Can you think of other rights?
Who can protect the rights of your child?	What are your rights as a parent?
What are your responsibilities as a parent?	

2.6 Legislative framework for inclusion in education and parental engagement

The **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, adopted by the United Nations in 1989, was fundamental to recognize the rights of all children. Article 2 of this Convention is important, as it mentions that all countries shall ensure there is no discrimination of any kind regarding a child, his/her parents or legal representants, including regarding a disability. Article 3 foresees that States Parties must ensure child protection and care as necessary for his/her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of the parents or other adults legally responsible. Article 5 states that the sole responsibility for the upbringing of children is with the parents (and not the state or school). Article 18 defines the duties of the state in supporting parents in all areas, including the education of their children. Article 27 also mentions that all countries must recognize the right of every child

to a standard of living adequate to the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development. Article 28 recognizes the right of the child to education, to achieve this right progressively and based on equal opportunities to all. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child is a body composed of 18 independent experts and is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

More recently, the European Union (EU) adopted the **Child Guarantee**, which is complementary to and consistent with other EU initiatives and aims to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Specifically, the Child Guarantee recommends all countries to take into account, wherever appropriate, specific forms of a disadvantage, such as the needs of children with a disability, and to take all measures needed to ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom, by children with disabilities, on an equal basis with other children. UNICEF estimates 93 million children worldwide live with disabilities. Nonetheless, disabilities cannot be a barrier to education, nor to quality education. Like any other child, children with disabilities have expectations, dreams, and ambitions, and the right to a quality education and learning, which is fundamental for them to develop their competences and reach their full potential. Similarly, parents of children with disabilities, like any other parents, have rights! To name a few, parents have the right to be appropriately informed, the right to have their child included in quality education, the right to participate in all decisions affecting their child, and the right to closely collaborate with professionals that support their child.

So, one important thing we must all have in mind is that inclusion is a matter of rights! Over the years different treaties and other relevant documents to support inclusion and defend the rights of children with disabilities and their families have been elaborated worldwide. They are crucial to an increasingly inclusive society and hold accountable governments, institutions, schools, community services and people for their actions.

A relevant document is the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, an international human rights treaty (agreement between governments) which states that people with disabilities (children, young people and adults) have certain rights. All governments that ratify this convention must align their laws, policies, and adopt specific measures to ensure the rights of children with disabilities. Article 24 of this Convention is particularly important, as it covers rights in education. Specifically, it refers to the Right to Education (the promotion of an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning), and to 3 main aims of education: (a) to make sure that every person can develop fully as a human being and feels respected and valued; (b) to make sure every disabled person develops fully as a human being; and (c) to make sure that people with disabilities are included in all parts of society.

At the European level, there are also other important documents:

- The **EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030** reinforced the urgence of improving the lives of persons with disabilities in the EU and beyond, towards a fully inclusive society (free of any type of discrimination) and proposing an intersectional perspective to the needs of children with disabilities.

- The **European Council 2019 Recommendation for High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Systems** offers a quality framework for ECEC to support Member States to work towards achieving higher quality and more inclusive ECEC systems [10]. Relatedly, the Toolkit for Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care recalls political commitments and policy recommendations and includes a set of practical solutions and measures to inspire ECEC policy makers and practitioners at the national, regional or local level.

- There are also European bodies that raise awareness, monitor, and, if necessary, hold countries, governments, and other institutions accountable if the guidelines for the rights and the inclusion of children with disability and their families are disrespected. For example, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is entitled to receive and consider communications from or on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals subject to its jurisdiction who claim to be victims of a violation of rights by that State Party (a state party is a country/government who ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and recognized the role of the Committee). In this case, the Committee informs the State Party that a communication has been received (maintaining its confidentiality) and gives the State Party six months to submit a written explanation clarifying the subject. Besides analysing the communication, and if necessary, the Committee may request further inquiries that may include a visit to the territory of the State Party. In parallel, all States Parties are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee explaining how the rights are being implemented. In terms of periodicity, States must report it within two years after ratifying the Convention, and every four years after that, or whenever requested by the Committee. The Committee is then responsible for examining the reports and addressing its observations and recommendations to each State party. Additionally, the Committee emits biannual/sessional reports about its main activities and decisions. To know more this topic, please visit the following

Time to reflect (if you are a parent)…

You may reflect on your own, with a partner/colleague or in a small group

Are you familiar with the laws and other important guidelines (national and international) regarding the rights of children with disabilities and their families? If not, what can you do? What other resources (for example, informative websites) can you use to find more information?

Have you ever witnessed a situation (for example, at school or in the community) that did not respect the rights nor ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities and their families? If yes, what kind of situation was it? What can you do to prevent other similar situations? Who can you talk to? What initiatives can you undertake?

Do you recall any good examples of inclusion of children with disabilities and their families at your child's school or within the community? If yes, please take note of the aspects that contributed to inclusion.

How can you be an active promoter of the inclusion of children with disabilities and their families?

Time to reflect (if you are a teacher)…

You may reflect on your own, with a partner or in a small group

Are you familiar with the laws and other important guidelines (national and international) regarding the rights of inclusive education for children with disabilities? If yes, how and where did you gain that knowledge? If not, what can you do to acquire that knowledge? What initiatives and resources can you use at your school and/or in your community to find more information?

Do you believe that your classroom is inclusive? If yes, please share some examples. If not, reflect on what situations do you think inclusion must be improved and how.

Do you believe that your school is inclusive? If yes, please share some examples. If not, reflect on what situations you think inclusion must be improved and how.

How can you be an active promoter of the inclusion of children with disabilities at your school?

Parents' role and parental engagement

In parallel with the legislative framework and other guidelines, parental engagement is key to an effective social inclusion. Parental engagement, of parents of children both with and without disabilities, can be referred to what families do at home and in their community to support children's inclusion, development, learning, well-being, and success. Parental engagement includes establishing partnerships and shared responsibilities between family, school, and other community organisations. As such, parental engagement can assume many forms, like a family being actively involved with the team responsible for the support of a child with disabilities at home or at school, in an after-school program, or in a local parent's association.

Establishing a family-school partnership is an interactive and collaborative process with different participants (for example, parents, teachers, other professionals). This partnership involves fundamental aspects, namely respecting and valuing each intervenients' knowledge and contributions; sharing information and responsibilities; ensuring mutual trust and a continuous flexibility to adapt and review goals, strategies, and resources, according to the child's and family needs and priorities.

Moreover, it is crucial to build a solid partnership with the professionals who care for children. Parents play a fundamental role in defending children's rights and needs and must assume a leading role in all decision-making. To this end, parents must have access to all information, support, and clarification that may be provided by professionals, so that they can make informed decisions. Furthermore, the contribution of all parents is essential for the elaboration and readaptation of national and international policies.

In fact, major achievements regarding the rights of children with disabilities and their families and the adoption of recommended practices, emerged from initiatives of individuals and families that jointly proposed changes to policies, programs, services and practices. Importantly, parental engagement and self-advocacy initiatives (for instance, supported by local/national associations) can include three levels which are interconnected – individual, system and policy level.

The entire community, from parents with and without children without disabilities, to teachers and other professionals within the community, is fundamental in supporting parents and families of children with disabilities. In effect, sometimes, for instance, families of children with disabilities may feel overwhelmed with the management of medical situations, responsibilities, family needs, relationships with teachers, health and other professionals, or even with financial duties. Therefore, mutual trust and support in advocating for the rights of all children can be crucial to help overcome those challenges in a more positive and successful way.

If you want to explore more about parental engagement, practical tools, and strategies to promote it, we invite you to visit this resource https://library.parenthelp.eu/a-playbook-for-family-school-engagement-by-brookings/

Time to reflect (if you are a parent or a teacher)…
You may reflect on your own, with a partner/colleague or in a small group

As a parent or as a teacher, how can you promote and support parental engagement and advocacy on behalf of families of children with disabilities? Does the school promote and support parental engagement and advocacy on behalf of families of children with disabilities? Are there any initiatives and/or associations in your local or in the broad community with whom you may get involved? What would be the small day-to-day actions that you could assure? What would need to change? Who would you need to involve? What role could you undertake?

2.7 Inclusive (child) participation

A crucial dimension of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) is expressed through the principle of respecting the views of the child. In order to know what is actually in the interest of the child it is logical to listen to him or her. The principle is formulated

in Article 12:1 which states that "States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the rights to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the view of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

The definitions of child participation vary according to certain features of the context in which they are used. For example, a broader definition describes participation as 'any form of social engagement', and on the other hand, a more specific definition refers to participation as 'taking part in decision-making processes'.

In our context, child participation is when children under 18 years of age contribute to decisions and take action on issues that affect their lives. This is best done through empowering children and nurturing positive relationships amongst children, adults and communities based on mutual respect and partnership at familial, local, national and international levels. This definition is consistent with other international definitions that establish a new paradigm to the status of children and young people by recognising them as subjects of rights.

UNCRC Article 12 includes two pivotal rights: the right to express a view and the right to have the view given due weight. The right to express a view freely means that children have the right to express relevant perspectives and experiences in order to influence decision-making. In this context, 'freely' means expressing a view is a choice, not an obligation and it is coercion-free. Furthermore, this right also includes a requirement for listening to the views of children and facilitating their participation in all matters affecting them within the family, schools, institutions and judicial procedures.

The right to have the view given due weight implies that when children express their views, this can be done in many different ways and with no restrictions on age or maturity—and their opinions will be considered regardless. Children do not have the duty to prove their maturity in order to give their views; on the contrary, the countries and decision-makers have the obligation to ensure the implementation of this right by listening to the views of the child and finding the best ways for children to express their opinions. In order to expand the concept of participation outlined in Article 12, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its General Comments 12 defined child participation as an 'ongoing process, which includes information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes.'

This definition embraces the notion of child participation as a process but also as an outcome, which has three pivotal components:

1. Impact in decision making;
2. Mutual respect between children and adults;
3. Joint learning process.

The Committee definition requires distinguishing between individual or collective participation of children in order to frame the outcomes of their interaction with others. Conversely, the inclusion of a decision-making feature implies the presence of a collective

component, where groups of individuals seek to influence decision-making and bring about change. This component does not mean that children's participation is an outcome determinant but denotes that participation is taking part with the knowledge that the actions will be taken into account and may be acted upon.

The second component, mutual respect between children and adults, refers to an ethical and political commitment to sharing information amongst children, young people and adults, which implies an interdependent relationship. Joint learning processes are about exchanging information between children and young people themselves and between children and adults. This concept has been embraced by several child-focused organisations.

The CRC's and the Committee on the Rights of the Child definition of participation gives a new status to children and young people by recognising them as subjects of rights which are entitled to be heard and can participate in decision-making. This definition produces a substantial shift in the nature of the relationships amongst children, young people and adults where they are recognised, for the first time in history, as having the right to participate. Participatory rights have been subjected to sustained criticism in relation to the complexities and limitations of the intergenerational relationship, lack of sustainability, tokenism, and exclusion. Research and practice have revealed the difficulty to practise these rights. Despite the intentions of Article 12, children still experience enormous limitations, discriminatory traditional practices and exclusion that prevent them from exercising their right to participate in decision-making. Practitioners and scholars have developed several models to address those issues.

Current child participation literature offers several models of participation such as the Hart's Ladder of Participation, Treseder's Degrees of Participation, Shier's Pathways to Participation, Lansdown's Model of Participation and Lundy's Model of Participation. For this document, Hart's Ladder will be used.

Level of children's participation	**Preschool**	**6–10 years old**	**11–14 years old**	**14–18 years old**
4. Assigned but informed Adults decide on the project and children volunteer for it. The children understand the project, and know who decided they should be involved and why. Adults respect their views.	- *The rules of the playground.* The teacher wants the children to learn the rules of the new playground that was built during the summer. Children are asked to test the equipment they like (monkey bars, slide, swing, sandbox, etc.) one	- *The school grounds.* The teachers create an environmental education project in which children can volunteer for various tasks to make the school grounds greener.	- *The school canteen.* The school head decides to reform the school canteen. Children are organised to conduct a survey created by the school head asking students	- *The field trip.* The teacher decides to take the class on a field trip to a museum that has a collection that is relevant for their subject. The teacher offers topics and children can volunteer to create

	by one and the teacher explains the rules. Children have the opportunity to ask questions.		about their preferences and the result of the survey is taken into consideration when the school head takes the necessary steps of reform.	short presentations during the field trip on various artefacts to explain their relevance. The teacher organises the trip giving small tasks to volunteers.
5. Consulted and informed The project is designed and run by adults but children are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.	- *The rules of the playground.* The teacher wants the children to learn the rules of the new playground that was built during the summer. Children are asked to test the equipment they like (monkey bars, slide, swing, sandbox, etc.) one by one and give feedback on what they think could be dangerous. Together they discuss how best to avoid these dangers and what rules they need to agree on to use the playground safely.	- *The school grounds.* The teachers create an environmental education project to make the school grounds greener. Volunteer children form groups and they have the opportunity to suggest ideas for various parts of the project which are taken into consideration.	- *The school canteen.* The school head decides to reform the school canteen. Children are invited to contribute to the creation of a survey about their preferences which is then conducted in the school and the result of the survey is taken into consideration when the school head takes the necessary steps of reform.	- *The field trip.* The teacher decides to take the class on a field trip to a museum that has a collection that is relevant for their subject. Children can propose topics and create short presentations during the field trip on various artefacts to explain their relevance. These presentations form a significant part of the school test they write later. Having consulted with the children, the teacher organises the trip and small tasks are

				managed by volunteers.
6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children Adults have the initial idea but children are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Not only are their views considered, but they are also involved in taking the decisions.	- *The rules of the playground.* Before the new playground is built, the children are asked about their favourite equipment and their answers are taken into consideration. When the playground is ready, children are asked to test the equipment and they give feedback on what they think could be dangerous. Based on their feedback, minor adjustments can be done to make it safer/more fun. Together they discuss what rules they need to agree on to use the playground safely.	- *The school grounds.* The teachers create an environmental education project to make the school grounds greener. Volunteer children are put in groups and are consulted on all the important aspects of the project: the needs assessment, the planning, distributing the resources and the tasks.	- *The school canteen.* The school head decides to reform the school canteen. Children are invited to contribute to the creation of a survey about their preferences which is then conducted in the school. The result of the survey is taken into consideration and the school head organises a “tasting event” where children have the opportunity to try meals and give feedback. Their feedback is an important element when the school head takes the necessary steps of reform.	- *The field trip.* The teacher offers the opportunity of a field trip that is relevant for their subject. Children research the possibilities and make suggestions on the destination. Together they decide which is the best solution. Children can propose topics and create short presentations during the field trip. They give feedback on the presentations and together they decide which of the presentations should be included in the school test they write later. Following a discussion, the teacher and the children agree to distribute organisational tasks.

7. Child-initiated and directed Children have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.	- *The rules of the playground.* Before the new playground is built, the children are consulted about their preferences. They can have a test run, give feedback and then there are adjustments to make it safer/more fun. Children suggest putting up warning signs. They discuss what signs are necessary and draw them together.	- *The school grounds.* Children propose an environmental education project to make the school grounds greener. They form task forces, distribute the tasks and decide on all the important aspects of the project.	- *The school canteen.* The children decide to reform the school canteen. They create a survey about their preferences which they then conduct in the school. Based on the results of the survey they organise a "tasting event" where they have the opportunity to try meals and give feedback. Based on the feedback, the children make suggestions on how to reform the school canteen. The school head accepts their research-based decisions and takes the necessary steps.	- *The field trip.* Children suggest the opportunity of a field trip that is relevant for their subject. They research the possibilities and make suggestions on the destination. They decide which is the best solution, propose topics and create short presentations during the field trip. They give feedback on the presentations and they decide which of the presentations should be included in the school test they write later. Children organise the trip and inform the teacher.
8. Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults Children have the ideas, set up the project, and invite adults to join	- *The rules of the playground.* Before the new playground is built, the children are consulted about their preferences. They can have a test run, give feedback	- *The school grounds.* Children propose an environmental education project to make the school grounds	- *The school canteen.* The children decide to reform the school canteen. They invite teachers and parents to contribute to a	- *The field trip.* Children suggest the opportunity of a field trip that is relevant for their subject. They research the

them in making decisions.	and then there are adjustments to make it safer/more fun. Children suggest putting up warning signs. They invite the teacher to comment on what the possible dangers are. Together they discuss what signs are necessary, where to place them and how best to draw them.	greener. They form task forces and invite teachers or external experts to contribute ideas. Based on the ideas and information they gathered, they distribute the tasks and decide on all the important aspects of the project.	survey about their preferences which they then conduct in the school. Based on the results of the survey they organise a "tasting event" where children and adults have the opportunity to try meals and give feedback. The children make suggestions on how to reform the school canteen. The school head accepts their research-based decisions and takes the necessary steps.	possibilities and make suggestions on the destination. They invite their teachers, present their ideas and listen to their feedback. Based on their feedback they decide which is the best solution, propose topics and create short presentations during the field trip. They give feedback on the presentations and also ask the teacher to comment. Together they decide which of the presentations should be included in the school test they write later. Children make plans on organising the trip, ask for the teacher's comments, make decisions and inform the teacher.

These examples of various school-related issues will help you understand how you can raise the level of children's participation in your school context:

2.8 Mentoring theory and practice

Mentoring is a process in which an individual who has overcome a certain situation in his life trajectory (professionally, personally, or socially) and has acquired skills and knowledge that have made it possible for them to obtain a recognized success path, seeks to share this knowledge and skills with another person who is in a vulnerable position.

A Mentor's mission aims at helping mentees to build their confidence, giving encouragement and positively reinforcing progress. A Mentor must boost mentees to make their own decisions. Thus, a mentor must be emotionally "ready" to support another person and be able to form an effective bond with the mentee, assuring confidentiality and providing authentic advice and nurturing.

The aim of this section is to explore what good mentors and good mentees can do toward achieving successful outcomes along their transformational journeys and to address specific features of effective mentoring, and to present how mentoring can help social inclusion.

Mentoring is a competence development-based process, combining guidance, counselling and coaching processes, which has been proven successful in terms of promoting excluded groups employability and social inclusion. Mentoring is not a professional relationship with a client nor a formal education. It's a relationship over a period of time between an individual possessing a greater share of experience, knowledge, or power and a mentee (recipient), who is, in most cases, in a vulnerable position to benefit from the skills and abilities of the mentor (Tolan et al, 2008).

Mentoring is a process, which involves the interaction between two individuals in which the mentee (apprentice) is in a position to benefit from the knowledge, skill, ability, or experience of the mentor. The mentoring process is marked by the absence of unequal roles (Finnegan et al, 2010).

A literature review by KPMG (2013) concluded that mentoring can have a positive and lasting effect on young people. Most of the findings are relevant for target groups other than young people. The collective findings of the literature reviewed in the report suggested that youth mentoring can provide benefits including:

- Positive effects on intermediate outcomes, such as mental health, which may in turn have a positive effect on outcomes such as recidivism.
- Improvements in mentee attitude and behaviour.
- Improvements in interpersonal relationships and integration into the community.
- Increased social inclusion
- Improved relationships with peers and parents.
- Improved health outcomes, including improved mental health and reduced substance misuse.
- Decreased youth violence
- Some reductions in recidivism

- Some improvements in academic achievement and integration into education and training.

Using mentors who have 'been there, done that' was identified as a success factor in the KPMG (2013) literature review. In addition, an evaluation of a mentoring programme for BME youth in the UK (Bartlett, 2012) found that the longer an individual had been a mentor the better the improvements in outcomes for the mentee.

Mentoring has become a key skill that is considered to be a long-term adult developmental process used in a wide range of contexts in order to promote support and interpersonal growth, to assist learning; to help weaker students or those with specific learning needs or difficulties; to develop community links among participants etc. Therefore, it is considered a strategy to share intellectual and emotional resources centred around the participants' relationships; it is also defined as an active process and a transactional relationship involving higher professional development and life-long learning among the parties involved: mentor, mentee/ protégé, organisation.

According to Wagh, D. (2015:98) "mentoring is a planned pairing of a more experienced person with a lesser skilled individual for the purpose of achieving mutually agreed outcomes. It is a partnership in which both individuals share in a growth process and the personal development of one another."

Furthermore, mentoring differs by context, features, and roles. It may be either task centred, social support centred, or career guidance centred. It may be affected by organisational, occupational, positional, and interpersonal variables. The mentoring process should be carefully planned and implemented; it should be outcome based because it is built on the goals and the investments of the involved partners. The mentoring relationship is at the core of a successful mentoring experience. This relationship helps cultivate more effective communication skills, movement toward application of theoretical concepts and knowledge, healthy relationships with peers, critical thinking skills, self-sufficiency and a deep understanding of professional identity and role. Mentoring schemes help parties involved to look at alternatives and options, to offer help and advice as well as to get someone else's perspective on the issue. Thus, effective mentoring requires understanding the needs of the mentee.

In Schafer's book The Vanishing Physician-Scientist (2009), the researcher refers to the six roles of a mentor who acts as an adviser, agent, confidant, role model, sponsor and teacher. It is as the adviser, that the mentor helps the mentee "refine ideas and get clarity of thought" (Schafer, 2009).

In Cluttebuck's opinion (2017:6), "effective mentors help the mentees understand their inner world, fostering their ability to become more self-aware of their emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, aspirations, fears, self-limiting beliefs and so on". For instance, the authors of the article entitled "Nature's guide for mentors" (Lee, A. et al. 2007) highlight generic traits of good mentors, such as enthusiasm, availability, hard-work and inspiring for others, encouraging skill development, as well as personal characteristics such as respect, unselfishness, appreciating individual differences, support etc. It also includes a useful set of self-assessment questions aimed at

encouraging reflection on one's mentoring and at identifying areas for improvement. A successful mentor should be someone who is constantly available to the mentee for guidance and advice, is consistent, resourceful, and reliable in his or her work and feedback being professional both within and outside the mentoring relationship (Price, 2004). The impact of a good mentor goes far beyond his or her own limitations.

The main role of adult mentors is to support youth develop self-efficacy, described as a belief in oneself. Thus, mentors accomplish this through a wide range of strategies such as: supporting and encouraging; listening; setting high expectations and pushing; showing interest in youth as individuals separate from academics or civic activities; fostering self-decision-making and providing another perspective during problem-solving (Price-Mitchell, M. 2015). Consequently, specific qualities that turn adults into exceptional mentors, helping youth grow and develop are summarised below:

a) "supportive and encouraging by far […], particularly as young people struggle to overcome obstacles and solve problems. When young people feel depressed, upset with their families, or unhappy in their life situations, mentors stand beside them, letting them talk about anything and reminding them of their innate value as human beings."

b) "active listeners. Mentors listen first and speak last. Many teens mentioned how little they feel listened to by most adults. Often, they feel inferior even when they have good ideas. But mentors are different. They always listen, even when they are not obligated to do so."

c) "people who push just enough […] teens like to have high expectations set for them- both academically and personally. They appreciate when mentors push them beyond what they may have imagined they could accomplish".

d) "authentically interested in youth as individuals […] Mentors engage youth to understand all aspects of their lives and interests. They value young people's ideas and honour their changing feelings and moods."

e) "nurturers of self-decision; making good mentors do not judge young people or impose their own beliefs on them. Instead, young people say they remind them who they are and help them believe they have the insights to make good choices. Knowing they are not being judged helps young people think through decisions critically, sifting through the deeper values that will inform the adults they become."

f) "sources of perspective. Adult mentors provide perspective to young people from their additional years of life experience. When obstacles seem overwhelming, mentors help put those challenges in perspective. They also help young people see both sides of a situation, helping model the skills of positive scepticism."

A review of the literature suggests other characteristics that ideal mentors might possess such as "the capacity to see the mentee as a special individual and be comfortable with cultural or socio-economic 'distance'; set high standards and be able to install confidence to aim high; respect the mentee's ability and right to make his or her own decisions; empathise with and understand the mentee's struggle; see

solutions not just problems; be flexible and open; be able to accept and link to other values, cultures and viewpoints; share resources, experience and knowledge; show interest, mutual respect and affection; show enthusiasm for particular subjects, interest areas and moral issues." (Miller, A.2002:198)

Furthermore, a useful way of defining mentor behaviours is to describe behaviours that mentors should always, sometimes or never display. For instance, "mentors should:

a) always: listen with empathy; share experience; form a mutual learning friendship; develop insight through reflection; be a sounding board; and encourage.

b) sometimes: use coaching behaviours; use counselling behaviours; challenge assumptions; be a role model; open doors or sponsor.

c) never: discipline; condemn; appraise formally; assess for a third party; supervise." (Miller, A.2002:198)

Different authors who have approached the topic of mentoring from differing perspectives discuss the space of mentoring. This concept implies the creation of a location/ a place for mentoring. This location can be informal or formal, virtual, or face-to-face, and may be structured physically by the leadership of the organisation or formed by the employees in less formal settings. The space of mentoring should be a place in which individuals can gain insight into each other's needs; a place to stop, learn, reflect, connect; where relationships can be strengthened. Additionally, in these spaces, the role of the mentor and mentee may flip, depending on their discussion and needs.

Spaces of mentoring can create great potential for individuals and their organisations. They should turn into places in which trust in individuals and trust in the organisation are built; as a result, they can improve the organisation's overall capacity. At the same time, these types of settings may be impromptu locations, thus considering similarities of potential mentor and mentee characteristics such as socioeconomic factors, gender, ethnicity, career levels, or social activism.

On one hand, if the space of mentoring is informal, those similarities may emerge naturally between an individual who may become a mentor and the individual who needs mentoring simply via common discussions on interests. On the other hand, if the space of mentoring is formal, then the individuals in management in an organisation should be aware of and assist their employees in understanding certain issues in the workplace, such as that of cross-gender mentoring or cross-ethnic mentoring.

The field of parenting has been in a state of major change and development since the 1990's. Parenting support refers "to any intervention for parents or carers aimed at reducing risks and/or promoting protective factors for their children, in relation to their social, physical and emotional well-being" (Moran, P. et al. 2004: 23). Support for parents comes from a variety of sources, such as informal provided by family, friends, etc., semi-formal, for example, community-based organisations and formal support, i.e. organised services. Two significant aspects of parenting support identified by Gardner (2003) are "prevention of damage" and "promotion of strengths". Research into the relationship between parents and mentoring outcomes suggests that much of the

impact on mentoring programs may be due to the role the parent plays. In J. Rhodes' research on mentoring relationships, the author determined that improved parental relationships for mentored youth acted as a mediator of the youth outcomes: "mentoring relationships led to increases in the levels of intimacy, communication, and trust adolescents felt towards their parents. These improvements, in turn, led to positive changes in a wide array of areas, such as the adolescents' sense of self-worth and scholastic achievement" (Rhodes, 2002: 40–41).

Community-based education should be regarded as a partnership between students, schools, and their communities, as they engage youth in authentic experiences within the public domain which result in meaningful learning outcomes. With the support of these programmes, students develop the incentive, knowledge, determination, and commitment that made high educational and occupational goals possible (James, C.E. 2005). Developing a parent mentoring project takes considerable time in planning, recruiting and training mentors, as well as identifying mentees. A flexible and adaptable approach is needed to run a parent mentoring project.

As it has been acknowledged, there are families in our communities at risk for child abuse and/or neglect. These families need guidance to make a positive change for themselves and their families. Parent mentor programmes work with families to bring about constructive change through support, guidance, instruction and/or treatment. A Parent mentor can help families do the best job possible in raising their children. The program recognizes that safety, permanency and wellbeing are essential to achieving a positive outcome for children. Thus, a child's successful transition to adulthood is doubtful without these essential family resources intact.

What are the traits of a good mentor?

Knowledge	Factors that help creating a safe connection
	Concept of mentoring and the role of a mentor and a mentor manager
	Mentoring process, styles, and tools
	Set realistic and attainable goals (e.g. SMART goals)
	Motivational strategies
	Difference between supporting and directing someone
	Importance of the relationship in the mentoring process

	Awareness of cultural differences and how it can affect relationships
Skills	Creates a comfortable environment for sharing information
	Establishes a positive and secure relationship
	Recognises progress
	Sets clear limits that allow a safe connection and relationship
	Challenges line of thought
	Respects fears and vulnerabilities
	Focus on achievements of others
	Uses initiative and sound judgement to problem solving
	Promotes autonomy and self-efficacy
Attitudes	Attentiveness to questions and problems
	Acceptance
	Non-judgemental
	Confidentiality
	Reliability
	Client-focused

Source: Parent'R'Us

3. Competences

In this section you can find proposals for ready-made in person training sessions (with proposed activities and practical resources) that can be delivered by parents and teachers, to different audiences. These sessions were planned to last from 60 to 90 minutes and they were organised around different competences/topics:

3.1. Assertive communication
3.2. Understanding diversity and similarities
3.3. Parental engagement, focusing specially on parents with challenges
3.4. Building resilience
3.5. Conflict management
3.6. Community building and collaboration

3.1 Assertive communication

Module Title	Assertive Communication
Duration	90 minutes
Learning outcomes	- Enhanced verbal and non-verbal communication (voice tone, face expressions, gestures, body language, eye contact, dressing) - Enhanced oral and written communication - Understanding communication barriers - Increased diversity awareness

Module activities plan

Activity no.	***Activity title***	***Duration in min's***	***Resources and materials***
1.	**Active listening**	10	Ideally chairs for every participant, but it's not necessary

2.	**Role play**	15	Printed cards with the situation, ideally chairs for the participants
3.	**Pictures**	15	Printed of electronic versions of the pictures included in the activity description
4.	**Personal mapping**	20	Colour markers, sheets of paper, chairs and tables
5.	**Opinion line**	15	List of statements
6.	**Harvest**	15	Flipchart paper and colour markers

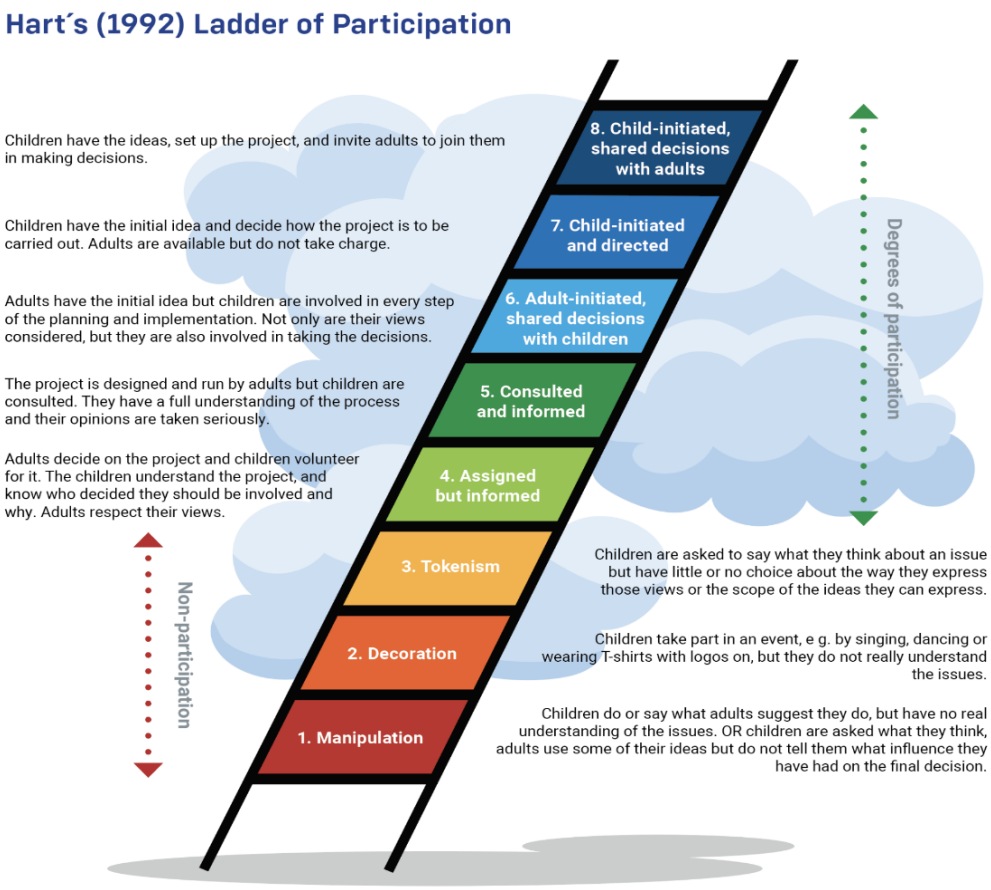
Detailed activities description

Activity 1: *Active listening*

Desired learning outcomes:

1. To learn to pay attention.
2. To learn to read body language messages.

Activity type: Pair work



Duration: 10 min

Material/ resources necessary: Ideally chairs for every participant, but it's not necessary

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Participants form pairs and decide who will be the listener/talker first.

2. The talker has 2 minutes to talk about a conflict they could not solve. The listener's task is to give active attention, not asking questions, speaking as little as possible, but acknowledging the talker continuously by humming, nodding.

3. The pairs swap places.

4. After the exercise the trainer should ask for some feedback and discuss why active listening is important in this project.

Alternatives: The topic of the conversation can be something more definite.

Activity 2: *Role play*

Desired learning outcomes:

1. To build empathy towards others.
2. To learn to look at situations from a different point of view.
3. To raise awareness of the different interests of parents/children/ teachers.

Activity type: Pair work

Duration: 15min

Material/ resources necessary: Printed cards with the situation, ideally chairs for the participants.

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Participants work in pairs. Depending on the situation they are given, they have to decide what role they play, but it has to be different from the one they have in their professional capacity. If they are teachers, they will play parents, if they are social workers or organisers, they might choose to play children.

2. The trainer hands out the situations to the pairs. Situations:

    - the child gets a bad mark at school
    - the parent is struggling to help the child with their homework
    - the school nurse finds head lice in the class (again)
    - the child is caught smoking after school
    - the child bullies a classmate
    - the child does not like the food served in school/kindergarten
    - the parent slaps a classmate for bullying their child
    - an expensive mobile phone disappears from class
    - the classroom window is broken
    - the parent storms into school because the child got a bad mark
    - the school psychologist has evidence that some children are cutting themselves as an after-school activity
    - the teacher is reprimanded for not using the school textbook
    - the teacher receives threatening messages from a parent
    - the parents argue about Christmas gifts for the head teacher
    - the child is told that they cannot participate at the school excursion because their disability cannot be accommodated

3. The pairs act out the situations on their own.
4. After the exercise the trainer asks 2–3 pairs to perform their situation to the others and ask for some feedback.
5. The trainer urges participants to discuss how they can use role play in the project.

Alternatives: If the trainer is aware of any particular situations that should be discussed, it can be included.

Activity 3: *Pictures*

Desired learning outcomes:

1. To identify violent communication.
2. To discuss possible ways of intervention and non-violent communication.

Activity type: Group activity (groups of 4)

Duration: 15min

Material/ resources necessary: Pictures printed, see below

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Participants work in groups of 4. Each group gets the two pictures.

2. They discuss the first picture, answering the following questions: What could have happened? How could they intervene? What useful ways of communication can they think of? 3. The trainer asks for comments.

4. They discuss the second picture asking the same questions.

5. The trainer asks for comments.

Alternatives: Different images picturing violent communication, bullying can be used.

Activity 4: *Personal mapping*

Desired learning outcomes:

1. To lean cooperation by consensus.
2. To experience individual values in co-operation.
3. To promote team building.

Activity type: Group activity (groups of 4)

Duration: 20 min

Material/ resources necessary: Large sheets of paper, colour markers, tables, chairs

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Participants form groups of 4.
2. The trainer hands out large sheets of paper and colour markers.

3. The participants discuss what kind of picture they want to create together. It can be a portrait or a landscape or even a non-figurative image, but all participants must identify with it.
4. Groups show their works to the others and discuss what difficulties they had to face when working together and how this experience is relevant in the project.

Alternatives: n/a

Activity 5: *Opinion line*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To learn to form and express an opinion.
- To learn how to accept others' opinions.
- To pinpointing possible problems in the attitudes of participants.

Activity type: Group activity (whole group)

Duration: 15 min

Material/ resources necessary: List of statements for the trainer

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Participants are told to imagine a straight line that spans across the room. One end of the line means 0%, the other end is 100%.

2. The trainer reads out statements, the participants have to decide how much they agree with the given statement. If they agree with it totally, they stand at the 100% end of the line, if they disagree totally, to the 0%. If they have some counterarguments, they can choose to stand anywhere between 0 and 100.

Statements:

- *Problem solving starts with communication.*
- *Parents can speak in the name of their children.*
- *Those who don´t speak up, should not complain if their opinion isn´t considered.*

3. After each statement the trainer asks some participants to explain their choice, and everybody is given the opportunity to change their places. However, debating should be discouraged, only different arguments should be expressed.

4. Participants discuss why it is important in this project to listen to each other's opinions.

Alternatives: Different statements can be used.

Activity 6: *Harvest*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To promote collective thinking

Activity type: Group activity (whole group)

Duration: 15min

Material/ resources necessary: *flipchart, pen*

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. The trainer puts the letters of the alphabet on the flipchart.
2. Participants can list what the traits of assertive communication are by using the letters as word starters, but they can only use each letter once, e.g. I take away C for clarity, E for eye contact.
3. Every letter should have a word by the end of the activity.

Alternatives: The participants can help each other by making suggestions if it is difficult to find a word starting with any of the letters.

3.2 Understanding diversity and similarities

Module Title	**Understanding diversity and similarities**
Duration	90 minutes
Learning outcomes	Parents of children without SENDs and teachers will further develop their competences towards: - disability and diversity - non-discrimination and rights of children with SENDs, and - the benefits of inclusive education for all (children, parents, teachers, and community in general)

Module activities plan

Activity no.	***Activity title***	***Duration in min's***	***Resources and materials***

1.	**Introductory activity**	Max 10 min	Optional format - e.g., handout, PowerPoint, vignettes)
2.	**Shared reflection/discussion**	Max 70 min (40 min small group + 30 min whole group)	World-café methodology - pens, post-its, towels/paper for the tables
3.	**Sum up**	Max. 10 min	No materials needed

Detailed activities description

Activity 1: *Introductory activity*

Activity about disability and diversity, non-discrimination, and rights of children with SENDs, and the benefits of inclusive education for all

Desired learning outcomes:

- To raise teachers and parents' awareness about disability, diversity, non-discrimination, and the benefits of inclusive education for all, towards the promotion of the rights of all children

Activity type: Presentation of information by the trainer

Duration: Max 10 min

Material/resources necessary: Optional - computer, projector, internet connection, PowerPoint presentation, handouts, vignettes, etc.

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Welcome participants, present the trainer(s) and ask participants to briefly present themselves
2. Present the objectives of the session – to provide information about disability and diversity, non-discrimination and inclusion, needs, equality of opportunities, equity and rights of children with SENDs, and the benefits of inclusive education for all (to present these concepts, please consult the knowledge section of this document)
3. Present the information (e.g., using handouts, vignettes, PowerPoint presentation, or other preferred means)
4. Redirect participants to the shared discussion using the world café methodology (small and whole group discussion)

Activity 2: *Shared reflection/discussion*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To promote reflection about disability and diversity, non-discrimination, and rights of children with SENDs, and the benefits of inclusive education for all

Activity type: Small group discussion/reflection followed by whole group discussion/reflection

Duration: Max 70 min (40 small group discussion + 30 min whole group discussion)

Material/resources necessary: Small papers with sentences printed, to be discussed by participants; other material - pens, post-its, towels/paper for the tables

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Present the activity – participants will discuss some ideas, in small groups, and then share in the whole group
2. Present the world café methodology (see more at http://theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/) – Example-situation: In a training session with 15 participants, ideally distribute 5 participants per table, and ask participants to elect a representant (table host); the table host remains in the same table, while the other participants circulate to the other tables; each table host is responsible for sharing the small group reflections with the whole group
3. In each table, ask participants to, during 10 min, read/discuss the sentences printed and share their ideas with the other participants of the table, registering their contributions in the table paper. Each table can therefore address a different general topic (with different questions for reflection, defined based on the group needs and interests), as suggested:

   Table 1 – "Disability and diversity"
   Table 2 – "Non-discrimination and rights"
   Table 3 – "Inclusive education and social inclusion"

4. After the 10 min, ask participants to go to a different table and proceed as in the first table; this procedure should be repeated until participants visit all tables (1o min per table) and return to their initial table (10 additional min to sum up)
5. Jointly discuss the ideas presented in each table, with the respective host sharing the main reflections (each host can sum-up the contributions presenting them in a paper, for instance)

Activity 3: *Sum up*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To sum up the group discussions about disability and diversity, non-discrimination, and rights of children with SENDs, and the benefits of inclusive education for all

Activity type: Final discussion

Duration: Max. 10 min

Material/resources necessary: No specific materials needed (although the written materials from the different groups can be used to illustrate/sum up discussions made)

Step-by-step description of the activity: Sum up on the ideas presented by each small group

3.3 Parental engagement focusing especially on parents with challenges

Module Title	Parental engagement
Duration	90 minutes
Learning outcomes	- Understanding what parental involvement vs parental engagement means - Working together: home responsibilities vs school responsibilities - Participatory and democratic processes - Innovative home-school links: enhancing collaboration between parents and school

Module activities plan

Activity no.	***Activity title***	***Duration in min's***	***Resources and materials***
1.	**Involvement and engagement**	40	Pens and papers, chairs, tables, whiteboard, whiteboard marker

2.	**Comfort zones**	15	Ropes, list of situations
3.	**Identity wheel**	25	Identity wheel copies for each participants, reflection questions for the trainer
4.	**Harvest**	10	Cut up family pictures, paper, pen, whiteboard, whiteboard pen, printed cards with images that represent feelings

Detailed activities description

Activity 1: *Involvement and engagement*

Desired learning outcomes:

1. To understanding basic terms of involvement and engagement.
2. To share ideas.

Activity type: Group activity (groups of 4-5)

Duration: 40 min

Material/ resources necessary: Pens and papers, chairs, tables, whiteboard, whiteboard marker

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Participants sit in groups of 4-5.
2. They are asked to list all the ways the parents can at that moment participate in the schools' life.
3. The trainer collects the items from the lists on a white board (without the possible duplications).
4. Participants are asked to imagine the ideal school and list other ways of participation that are not possible for some reason, but would be useful.
5. The trainer makes a new list of these and discusses the reasons why they would be useful, why they are not possible at the moment and what they could do to make them possible.
6. During this discussion the trainer explains the practical and theoretical differences between parent involvement and parent engagement, e.g., 'parents are asked to bring cake to the school ball' versus 'parents are asked to participate in the planning of the school ball'.
7. Each group makes a plan on how an ideal school should approach the parents.

8. They present their strategies to everybody and – with the help of the trainer – participants discuss which methods are viable.

Alternatives: n/a

Activity 2: *Comfort zone*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To raise self-knowledge.
- To learn about the comfort/challenge/panic zones.

Activity type: Group activity (whole group)

Duration: 15 min

Material/ resources necessary: 2 ropes or other materials to form two large circles

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Two circles are formed from ropes or drawn in chalk on the floor.
2. The trainer explains that the inner circle is the comfort zone where one feels safe and comfortable. This circle should be big enough to hold all the participants. The zone between the two circle lines is the challenge zone, this is where one has to make an effort so that one can develop. The outer line is the boundary of the panic zone where one is frozen with fear or might act aggressively and without thinking.
3. The trainer lists activities and each participant can decide in which zone they would be if they had to perform that activity.

Activities:

- talking to a mass of people
- dress a bleeding wound
- talk to an angry parent
- pet a spider
- comfort a crying child
- plan a wedding for a hundred people
- visit the headmaster's office
- make an official complaint
- sing publicly

4. The trainer asks some of the participants to explain their choices and feelings. If somebody goes to the panic zone, the trainer asks what could help in these situations to ease the panic.

Alternatives: n/a

Activity 3: *Identity wheel*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To promote reflection about individual identities

Activity type: Group activity (whole group)

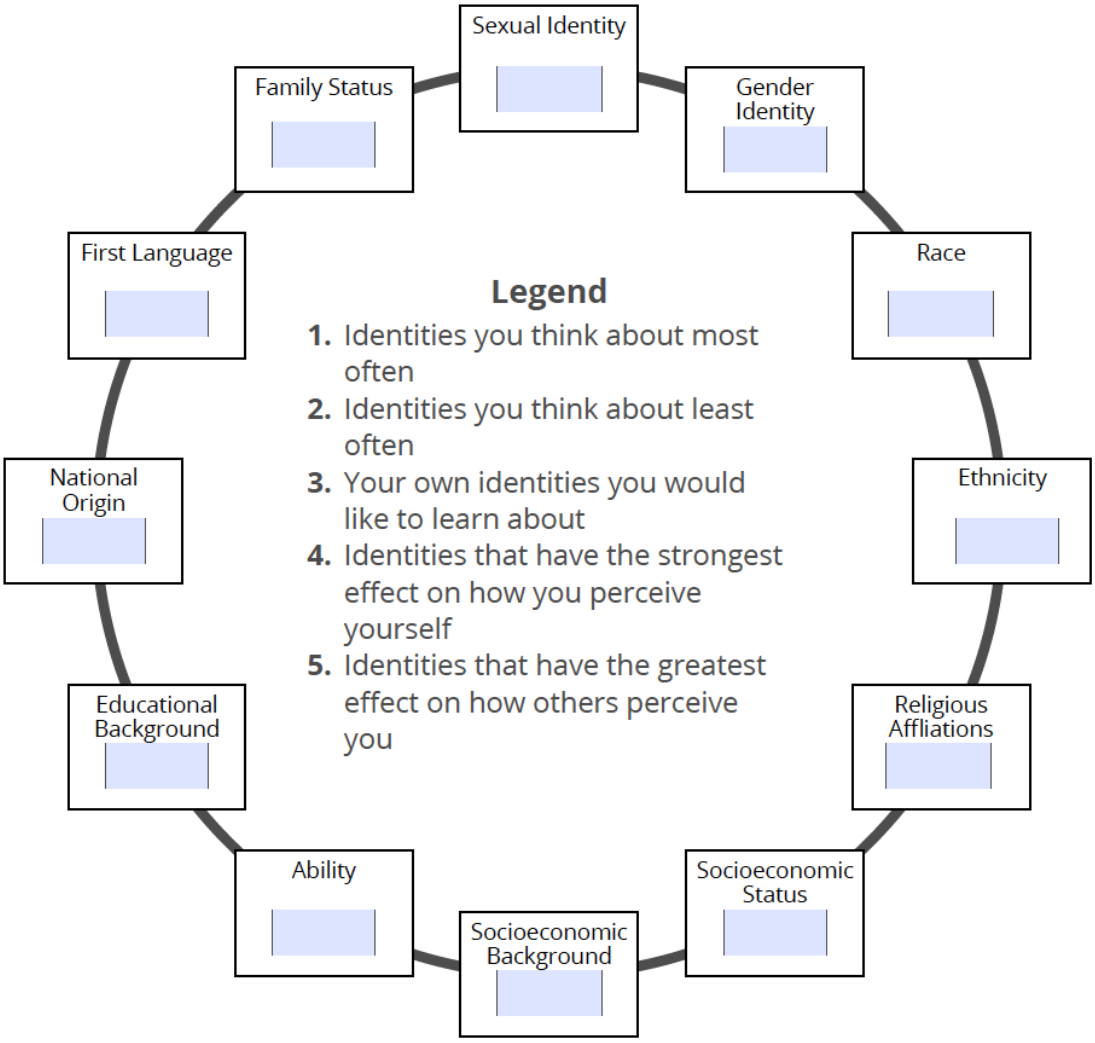
Duration: 25 min

Material/ resources necessary: pens, printed identity wheels

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Participants are handed a printed identity wheel
2. They are asked to consider their identities in relation to the numbered reflective questions listed in the legend below.
3. Each question asks them to consider how you think about your identities. Each box on the wheel represents a different facet of identity. They need to write in the number that corresponds with each reflective question as it relates to a particular identity facet. The legend for each number association is as follows:

    1. Identities you think about most often
    2. Identities you think about least often
    3. Your own identities you would like to learn about
    4. Identities that have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself
    5. Identities that have the greatest effect on how others perceive you



4. After the completion the trainer asks follow up questions to discuss it:

1. Which aspects of your identity did you mark as particularly meaningful to you? Why?

2. Which aspects of your identity did you mark as less meaningful? Why?

3. Why do you think about some aspects of your identity more than others?

4. Which aspects of identity hadn't you thought of before completing this activity? Why do you think that is?

5. What aspects of your identity do you think are apparent to students/children? Which aspects may they not perceive as readily?

Alternatives: n/a

Activity 4: *Harvest*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To list and systematise information
- To promote self-knowledge.

Activity type: Group activity (whole group)

Duration: 10 min

Material/ resources necessary: Cut up family pictures, paper, pen, whiteboard, whiteboard pen, printed cards with images that represent feelings

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Photos of families are cut in 4–5 pieces. Each participant gets a piece and finds their group by fitting the pieces of the same picture together.
2. The groups are asked to make a list of what new information, ideas they learnt during this training. They should circle the three most important.
3. The trainer puts the ideas on the whiteboard (omitting items that are repeated).
4. The groups discuss what kind of skills they had to use during the games and what the games helped with. They also list ideas about how gamification can be used in parental engagement.
5. The trainer puts the skills and ideas on the whiteboard (omitting items that are repeated).
6. Participants are asked to sit in a big circle. Various image cards are put on the floor. They have to choose one that somehow shows how they feel. They reflect on the training one by one by showing the card and explaining why they chose that card.

Alternatives: n/a

3.4 Building resilience

Module Title	Building resilience
Duration	90 minutes

Learning outcomes	- Improving skills to build resilience - Discover five pillars of resilience - Self – expression

Module activities plan

Activity no.	***Activity title***	***Duration in min's***	***Resources and materials***
1.	Pillars of resilience	30	Paper, pen, printed 5 pillar scheme
2.	Being aware of difficulties	10	No specific material
1.	Understanding intellectual disability	10	No specific material
4.	Steps to build resilience	30	Print tables 1 and 2

Detailed activities description

Activity 1: *Pillars of Resilience*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To understand what is mental resilience

- To discover five pillars of resilience

Activity type: Pair work

Duration: 30 min

Material/ resources necessary: Paper, pen, printed 5 pillars' table (below)

Mental resilience is defined as the individual's ability to effectively cope with short or long-term stressful situations, such as a disability (Maddi, 2006). It depends on social conditions and endogenous factors, which affect adaptation.

Resilience is made up of five pillars:

A. self-awareness,
B. mindfulness,
C. self-care,
D. positive relationships and
E. **purpose**.
Take a pen and a paper and complete the following sentences
1. How can I take care of myself every day?
2. How can I make every day meaningful?
3. Things I want to learn from experience now that I grow older
4. How can I be proactive?
5. How can I get connected with loved ones?
Other notes

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Print and show the following scheme and discuss with the group the five pillars
2. Small group discussion/reflection followed by whole group discussion/reflection
3. Take your pen and complete the sentences
4. Small group discussion/reflection followed by whole group discussion/reflection

Activity 2: *Being aware of difficulties*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To raise awareness/understanding struggles

Activity type: Solo and group

Duration: 10 min.

Material/resources necessary: Pieces of paper/different color pens.

Step-by-step description of the activity:

- Write down colour names with different colours.
- Have the group read it out loud. Participants must read the COLOR the word is written in, not the word itself.
- Afterwards, discuss how your brain wants to read the actual word.

  Even when you can make yourself do it correctly, you have to read much slower than normal. This is an example of how difficult it is for students with learning disabilities to get through the day. Not being able to do this activity correctly does not mean you are not smart. It just means that your brain wants to do something different.

Activity 3: *Understanding intellectual disability*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To understand barriers and attitudes towards intellectual disability.

Activity type: Solo and group

Duration: 10 min

Material/resources necessary: No specific materials needed (participants only)

Step-by-step description of the activity:

- Participants must think of a sentence/message they want to share with the group without writing, speaking, or spelling.
- As group, debate about the difficulties experienced by those who want to share a message, and by those who need to understand it, reflecting specifically the difficulties experienced by children with disabilities.

  This activity will make clear to participants that when an ability to communicate is compromised, it may be very hard to get across one's emotions and feelings. The frustration caused by the miscommunication will enable the participants to understand the barriers children with intellectual disabilities and their families have to overcome.

Activity 3: *Steps to build resilience*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To know more about building resilience
- To promote self – discovery
- To practice through a roleplay (to be developed)

Activity type: Solo and group (roleplay)

Duration: 30 min

Step-by-step description of the activity:

- Create a roleplay situation in participants play the role of parents of a child with disabilities and the trainer of the session plays the role of the professional who supports parents.
- For participants: Playing the role of a parent of a child with disabilities, take 10 minutes to read and reflect on how the following sentences would apply to you (table 1).
- For the trainer: Playing the role of the professional who supports parents/children, use table 2 to provide support to the person who plays the role of the parent
- Exchange your thoughts or feelings during this exercise

Material/ resources necessary: Print table 1 (for the participants, who play the role of parents)

1. I have many friends and relatives that support me
2. I prefer facing on my own my problems

3. I'm trying to look beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better
4. I see crises as insurmountable problems
5. I accept change is a part of living
6. It's difficult for me to accept changes
7. I focus on tasks that often are unachievable
8. I usually develop realistic goals
9. I usually act on adverse situations
10. I look for opportunities for self-discovery, such as better relationships, increased sense of self-worth, more developed spirituality etc.
11. I take care of myself by paying attention to my needs and feelings
12. I try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective
13. I think I can trust my instincts and my ability to solve problems

Print table 2 (for the trainer, who plays the role of the professional who supports parents/children)

Steps to Build Resilience

1. Make connections. Good relationships with close family members, friends, or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organisations, or other local groups provides social support and

can help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.
2. Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems. You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.
3. Accept that change is a part of living. Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.
4. Move toward your goals. Develop some realistic goals. Do something regularly — even if it seems like a small accomplishment — that enables you to move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"
5. Take decisive actions. Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.
6. Look for opportunities for self-discovery. People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and heightened appreciation for life.
7. Nurture a positive view of yourself. Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.
8. Keep things in perspective. Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion.

9. Maintain a hopeful outlook. An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualising what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.
10. Take care of yourself. Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

3.5 Conflict management

Module Title	*Conflict management*
Duration	90 minutes
Learning outcomes	Participants will learn more about conflicts and how to deal with them and will have a toolkit for conflict management.

Module activities plan

Activity no.	***Activity title***	***Duration in min's***	***Resources and materials***
1.	**Ice breaking games**	10	"Amazing Anne": a beanbag / small ball / fluffy stuffed animal
2.	**Common rules**	3	flip chart paper and a felt-tip pen

3.	**What is conflict? How do you see it?"**	25-30	papers with the interview questions, pens and a flip chart paper with thick felt-tip pen
4.	**Count to 20 / Empty chair**	5	Empty chairs: chairs
5.	**Spaghetti challenge**	7-10	Depends on the number of the participants: 20 pieces of dry spaghetti for EACH group, marshmallows (1 for each group), sellotape (1 roll for each group)
6.	**Active listening / Blind game (trust)**	7-10	Blind game: chairs, tables, and other obstacles
7.	**Skills for conflict management**	5	Flip chart papers and pens
8.	**Role playing**	15	Paper and pens if needed
9.	**Closing circle**	(depends)	No specific material needed

Detailed activities description

Activity 1: *Ice breaking games*

Desired learning outcomes:

- "Break the ice": To make participants feel comfortable and safe.

Activity type: Group activity

Duration: 10 min (depending on the number of the participants and if they already know each other or not)

a. "Danish clap"

Material/ resources necessary: Just the participants in pairs

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. This is played in pairs.
2. Stand facing your partner and clap your hands together at the same time.
3. Now choose from one of three positions; arms in the air, arms to the left or arms to the right.
4. Now clap your hands in the middle again.
5. The rhythm is clap, move arms, clap, move arms, etc.
6. You are not trying to mirror your partner but you are moving at the same time as them. Sometimes your moves will match up, sometimes they won't.
7. If you happen to mirror them when you throw out your arms (i.e., their arms go up when yours do), clap as normal, then celebrate with a high 10 and say "YEAH!", clap again and go back into throwing your arms out.

Some instructions and variations of this activity can be found on the internet.

b. "Amazing Anne"

Material/ resources necessary: A beanbag/small ball/fluffy stuffed animal

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. To learn each other's name this game is perfect.
2. You can use a bean bag, a small ball, anything.
3. The facilitator starts. Say an adjective with the first letter of your name, followed by your name. For example, Amazing Anne.
4. Then you throw the tool you are using to someone else.
5. He or she should introduce himself or herself in the same way and repeat the previous one.
6. The third person has to repeat the previous two, and so on.

c. "Two truth, one lie"

This activity may be particularly useful for smaller group settings.

Material/ resources necessary: just the participants in pairs

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Standing in a circle, each person will share two truths and one lie about themselves. The true and false statements can be about anything, or you can restrict it to a specific theme, the choice is yours.
2. One by one, the group will listen to each participant's statements and decide which are the truths and which is the lie. This activity can be a lot of fun, especially when participants include something funny that has happened to them in the past.

Activity 2: *Common rules*

Desired outcomes:

- To make the training comfortable for everyone.

Activity type: Group activity - together

Duration: 3 minutes

Material/ resources necessary: Flip chart paper and a felt-tip pen

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Ask the participants to think about what rules they need to feel comfortable and safe. Give an example: for example, "We always listen to each other" could be an important rule.
2. Whichever rule you agree on, write it on the flipchart.
3. Put the finished rule on the wall.

Activity 3: *What is conflict? How do you see it?*

Desired learning outcomes:

- Participants will know what conflict is and how to deal with it.
- The first step is to see conflict as an opportunity, not a problem.
- They will have an overview of the disadvantages but also of the advantages.

Activity type: Group activity with tasks in pairs

Duration: 25-30 min

Material/resources necessary: Papers with the interview questions, pens and a flip chart paper with thick felt-tip pen

Step-by-step description of the activity:

All participants receive a copy of the interview questions and they interview each other in 5 minutes

1. How do you define conflict?
2. What is your typical response to conflict?
3. What is your greatest strength when dealing with conflict?
4. If you could change one thing about the way you handle conflict, what would it be? Why?
5. What is the most important outcome of conflict?

After 5 minutes one in each pair goes over to the next pair's place, people share the outcomes of their interviews with a member of another pair using the following discussion questions:

1. Were your partner's perspectives different from your perspective?
2. What were some things you learned by considering another's perspective?
3. Does discussing conflict like this makes it "less scary"? In what ways?
4. Is conflict good or bad?
5. What are some ways in which conflict is detrimental to the team?
6. What are some ways in which conflict enriches the team?

Participants come together in groups of 4 and discuss the following questions:

1. How does the definition of conflict affect the way we think about conflict?
2. What are some negative consequences of conflict?
3. What are some positive outcomes of conflict?

To wrap up each group comes up with 2 potential positive outcomes of conflict, the facilitator lists them on a flipchart paper on the wall.

You will hear a lot of good examples, and we will list a few below:

Advantages of a conflict:

- forcing new or neglected ideas to be discussed;
- arousing interest in solving certain problems;
- loosening the rigid status quo and promoting progress;
- processing the problem stimulates the imagination and allows the situation to be reassessed, and that those involved are prepared to fight together for an optimal level of incentives and system in case of conflict.

Activity 4: *Count to 20*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To solve a conflict and experience the feeling of solving it together, as this situation (activity) represents a very simple "conflict" that participants solve when they can do the task successfully and discuss the strategy to do it.

Activity type: Group activity - together

Duration: 5 minutes

Material/resources necessary: *just the participants*

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Sit in a circle.
2. Participants have to count to 20, but only one person can speak at the same time.
3. If two people start speaking, they have to start again.
4. After a few unsuccessful attempts, the facilitator offers the participants two minutes of discussion time to form a strategy.

Alternatives: Empty chair

Activity type: Group activity

Duration: 10 minutes

Material/ resources necessary: Chairs (number of the participants plus one)

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Participants sit on chairs that are placed in disorder all over the room (not in a circle!).
2. There is an empty chair.
3. The facilitator walks slowly and tries to sit down.
4. The participants try to prevent this by sitting on the empty chair. But when one participant sits on the empty chair, their original chair becomes empty, so the facilitator can sit on that.
5. Once a participant gets up from a chair, they cannot sit back onto the same chair.
6. After the first unsuccessful attempt, the facilitator offers the participants two minutes of discussion time to form a strategy.

Activity 5: *Spaghetti challenge*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To learn to cooperate

Activity type: Group activity (groups of 3-5)

Duration: 7-10 minutes

Material/ resources necessary (depends on the number of the participants): 20 pieces of dry spaghetti for EACH group, marshmallows (1 for each group), sellotape (1 roll for each group)

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Participants form groups of 3-5 people (depends on the number of the participants).
2. Each group gets 20 pieces of dry spaghetti, a marshmallow candy and a sellotape.
3. They have to build the tallest structure they can, with the candy on top.

After this activity ask the participants how they felt during the exercise and how they worked as a team.

Activity 6: *Active listening*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To develop active listening

Activity type: Pair work

Duration: 10 minutes

Material/resources necessary: *just the participants*

Step-by-step description of the activity:

Participants form pairs and decide who will be the listener/talker first.

1. The talker has 2 minutes to talk about a conflict they could not solve.
2. The listener's task is to give active attention, not asking questions, speaking as little as possible, but acknowledging the talker continuously by humming, nodding.
3. When the first 2 minutes are up, the pairs swap places.
4. After the exercise the facilitator asks for some feedback and explains why active listening is important in conflict management.

Alternatives: Blind game (trust)

Desired learning outcomes:

1. To learn not to step out of their role.

2. To learn to trust.

Activity type: Pair work (this activity is better in smaller group trainings)

Duration: 7-10 min

Material/resources necessary: Chairs, tables and other obstacles

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Participants form pairs.
2. Facilitator arranges chairs and other obstacles in the room.
3. One of the pair closes their eyes (blind), the other (the leader) can only use their voice to guide them. No touching is allowed. The leader should pay attention that the blind does not touch the obstacles.
4. Facilitator can move around the obstacles to make the game more difficult.
5. Next, the pairs change roles.

After both activities, ask the participants

- how they felt during the activity and
- what skill(s) they thought they needed to complete the task.

Activity 7: *Skills for conflict management*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To know important aspects needed for conflict management

Activity type: Group activity (groups of 3-5, depends on the number of the participants)

Duration: 5 min

Material/resources necessary: Flip chart papers and pens

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Form groups of 3-5 people.
2. Ask them to collect all the things they need to manage conflict.
3. Write them down on flipchart paper.
4. When the time is up, hang the flip chart papers on the wall.

Activity 8: *Role playing*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To learn how to manage a conflict.

Activity type: Group activity (groups of 3-6) You can form bigger and smaller groups if you would like them to shape the situation for the group size.

Duration: 15 min

Material/resources necessary: Just the participants, maybe papers and pens if needed

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Invent a situation about a conflict for each group or let participants invent one for themselves. For example, it could be a very relevant and common conflict in a kindergarten where a parent and a kindergarten teacher are in conflict or a parent-parent conflict on a playground. But if you consider it too difficult for your group, you could also try a boss-employee or a staff-staff conflict too.
2. Ask participants to think of a solution too and act it out.
3. Depending on the time, all groups or just one can act it out in front of the others.

Alternative: You can also substitute other activities for role-playing. Keep in mind that the purpose of the exercise is to practice conflict resolution. A little help: below you can see the steps of conflict management and some examples that may help to solve a conflict.

The process of conflict management

1. Recognising the conflict
2. Reflection and self-reflection - as a pillar/base of conflict resolution

Let's look at what factors can cause or exacerbate conflict within ourselves. Our beliefs, prejudices, fears? Reflect on them.

3. Reflect on each other's fundamental interests
4. Explore the possibilities for resolution
5. Identify and mutually accept the solution

Tools for finding solutions:

- Brainstorming, problem analysis tree, decision graph cause, and effect analysis
- Mediation - involving a third party in the conflict (if both parties agree)
- Overriding goals (the goal is more important than the conflict)
- Forced to cooperate
- Intergroup training

Activity 9: *Closing circle*

Desired outcomes:

- To end the training and have feedbacks

Activity type: Group activity

Duration: The duration depends on the number of participants. It is important to leave enough time for feedback. If time is short, regulate how much they can talk (during "one breath"/1-3 sentences/max 30 seconds etc.) If you give a framework for feedback, it usually helps the participants.

Material/resources necessary: Just the participants

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Sit in a circle.
2. Everybody has to say one or two sentences about the training/feelings now/what they take with them from the training.

3.6 Community building and collaboration

Module Title	**Community building and collaboration**
Duration (in minutes) (60-90 minutes)	Approx. 90 min
Learning outcomes	Parents of children with typical development and teachers/other professionals will develop positive attitudes and competences that foster close collaboration and partnerships with parents of children with SENDs, towards a more inclusive community

Module activities plan

Activity no.	***Activity title***	***Duration in min's***	***Resources and materials***
1.	**Introductory activity**	Max. 10 min	Optional format - e.g., handout, PowerPoint, vignettes

2.	**Challenging situation and shared reflection/discussion** (Case creation/definition + Small Group discussion + Whole group discussion)	Max. 70 min (max. 15 for case creation; max. 25 min small group discussion + 30 min whole group discussion)	Optional material for the creation/presentation/discussion of the case
3.	**Sum up**	Max. 10 min	No specific material needed

Detailed activities description

Activity 1: *Introductory activity*

Presentation focusing on the relevance/how parents of children with typical development and teachers/other professionals can establish close collaboration/partnerships with parents of children with SENDs

Desired learning outcomes:

- To raise awareness and promote positive attitudes and competences on how parents of children with typical development and teachers/other professionals can establish close collaboration/partnerships with parents of children with SENDs

Activity type: Presentation of information by the trainer

Duration: Max. 10 min

Material/resources necessary: Optional for the creation/presentation/discussion of the case - computer, projector, internet connection, PowerPoint presentation, handouts, vignettes, paper, pen/pencil, etc.

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Welcome participants, present the trainer(s) and ask participants to briefly present themselves
2. Present the objectives of the session – to provide information on the relevance/how parents of children with typical development and teachers/other professionals can establish close collaboration/partnerships with parents of children with SENDs
3. Present the information (e.g., using handouts, vignettes, PowerPoint presentation, or other preferred means) (please consult the knowledge section for information on the proposed content – collaboration and partnerships with parents of children with SENDs)

4. Redirect participants to the activity

Activity 2: *Shared reflection/discussion*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To promote reflection on how parents of children with typical development and teachers/other professionals can establish close collaboration/partnerships with parents of children with SENDs, overcoming challenging situations related with inclusion

Activity type: Group - Case definition/creation, followed by small and whole group discussion/reflection

Duration: Max. 70 min (15 min for definition/creation of the challenging situation; 25 min for discussion in small group; 30 min for discussion in the whole group)

Material/resources necessary: Optional materials both for the case definition/discussion – pencil/pen, post-its/paper for the tables, etc.

Step-by-step description of the activity:

1. Divide participants in two groups, each group with an elected representative.
2. In 15 min, each group will create an example of a real or imagined challenging situation related with a child with SENDs, in which the child and/or family rights and the equality of opportunities have been compromised, and/or discrimination has occurred. This situation can refer to the family, the school, or the community context.
3. After creation/definition of the two examples of a challenging situation, the representative of each group will share the challenging situation to all participants. Each group will then collaboratively brainstorm ideas/actions/strategies and discuss the challenging situation created by the other group, in a total of 25 min. Reflections must focus on actions and strategies that may be adopted, involving a positive collaboration/partnership between parents of children without SENDs and teachers/other professionals, and families of children with SENDs, towards improving the challenging situation - e.g., how to involve the community, how to involve teachers and parents of children with and without SENDs, how to overcome potential barriers, how to identify/mobilise facilitators, what specific partnerships can be important for inclusion, etc. Ideas can be registered in paper, in a flipchart, or through other preferred means.
4. After discussion in small groups, the representative of each group will share the main reflections with the whole group, jointly discussing actions and strategies proposed (e.g., which are more innovative, which require more collaboration, etc.).

Activity 3: *Sum up*

Desired learning outcomes:

- To sum up the group discussions about the relevance and how parents of children with typical development and teachers/other professionals can establish a close collaboration and partnerships with parents of children with SENDs

Activity type: Group (final discussion)

Duration: Max. 10 min

Material/resources necessary: No specific materials needed (although the written materials from the different groups can be used to illustrate/sum up discussions made)

Step-by-step description of the activity: Sum up on the ideas presented by each small group

4. Practical tools that can be used

In this section you can find suggestions for tools and methodologies that can be used in practice, both in training sessions or directly with children.

4.1 Organizing an inclusive event

Event Planning: Preliminaries

- Consider the timing of the event – avoid early morning and late evening time slots.
- Consider the size of the venue required: estimate the number of potential attendees and be liberal in assessing space required, to comfortably accommodate the movement of persons using wheelchairs, scooters and other mobility devices, persons with visual disabilities, persons with assistance dogs, and other attendees. (Too small a space creates “bunching” and segregation of wheelchairs etc. near entrances, and limited movement, discomfort, and potential trip hazards for all attendees.)
- Consider the adequacy of airflow, lighting, and acoustics, bearing in mind the number of individuals likely to attend the event and the potential impacts of ambient noise, body heat, chemical sensitivity triggers, etc.

Promotion and Advertising

- Ensure that the event is promoted and advertised broadly, and in a manner that includes community members with all types of disabilities.

- Ensure that promotion and advertising is carried out in a variety of modalities, such as: email, social media, websites, posters, flyers, etc. – so as to enhance inclusion.
- Ensure that promotion and advertising occur far enough in advance to allow any requested accommodations to be comfortably and thoroughly implemented.
- Websites, emails, social media, flyers, hardcopy mailings, posters and all other promotional and advertising materials for the event should include a statement that anyone requiring an accommodation may contact the event planner and request the same. Contact information should be provided that includes the appropriate name of event planner, and both telephone and email contacts.

  Sample statement:

  "If you require an accessibility-related measure (e.g.: sign language interpretation, captioning, accessible parking, specific dietary requirements, or any other accessibility-related measure) please contact _____ (name, phone number, email address, etc.)."

- Included in promotional and advertising materials, a request that attendees refrain from wearing perfumes and scented soaps to prevent causing allergic reactions for other attendees.
- In preparing any websites, emails, hardcopy mailings, posters and all other promotional materials the following basic accessibility principles should be observed: recommended text size is 14 point or larger. The recommended font is a sans serif font such as arial. Fancy, small or italic scripts are not accessible. Use high contrast colours – simple use of dark text on a light background is preferred. Do not embed essential information, including the name, date, time and location of the event, and the accessibility statement described above, in a graphic. Graphics often cannot be 'read' by a screen reader being used by a person with a visual disability.
- If film or video materials are being used on the website to advertise the event, ideally, they should be captioned.
- Ensure promotional material is delivered to potential attendees in sufficient time for them to make accommodation requests, and to arrange for transportation.
- Include with the promotional material clear information on how to get to the event, ideally including both a map and text instructions.
- Make materials for the event available in alternate formats, such as an electronic version as well as hard copy, and provide copies in advance of the event upon request.
- Ensure that if you are working with a contractor, they adhere to these advertising and promotion accessibility principles, and that this is included as a condition in the contract terms, to be enforceable. Provide the Contractor with a copy of this checklist.

Getting There/Transportation

- Provide clear signage at appropriate locations, such as nearby transit points and parking areas.
- Avoid using signage in a manner that blocks sidewalks or creates a trip hazard.
- Ensure that the route between parking / transit, and the event location and entranceway, is accessible.
- Ensure there is sufficient accessible parking.

Per above: Ensure promotional material is available in sufficient time for people to make accommodation requests, and to arrange for transportation.

Per above: Include with the promotional material clear information on how to get to the event, ideally including both a map and text instructions.

Event Site

- Ensure that all entrance ways are clearly marked and accessible – no stairs or ledges/lips to doorways; doors have a minimum width of 80 centimetres (preferably wider), and doors are equipped with clearly marked automatic openers.
- Ensure the entrance doors' automatic openers are activated. Frequently, access is limited by automatic door openers that are available, but not activated.
- Ensure that all products, displays, and information are arranged at a height that can be accessed by everyone comfortably, including those using wheelchairs or scooters.
- Ensure a level, smooth, accessible surface throughout the venue.
- Ensure there is adequate lighting, including in parking areas and at routes to transit links.
- Ensure that any emergency evacuation procedures take into account the needs of people with mobility and sensory disabilities.
- Ensure tables are an appropriate height to accommodate wheelchairs.
- Ensure there is sufficient space between tables for navigation by wheelchairs, scooters, assistance animals, and other mobility devices.
- Ensure there are sufficient spaces available without chairs, for use by wheelchairs and scooters, but avoid designating a single area as "for wheelchair use" as this segregates individuals using wheelchairs from being seated with friends and colleagues. Instead, disperse wheelchair accessible spaces throughout the event.
- Ensure the pathways to displays, stages, speakers' podium, etc. are wide enough for wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility aids, and are free from trip hazards.
- Ensure the stage or speakers' podium itself is accessible, including for persons using wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility aids.
- Provide seats near the front of the room for individuals who have a hearing or vision disability to provide clear access to sign language interpreters, and so people can more easily lip read, or better hear speakers/sound enhancing devices, etc.
- Ensure washrooms, telephones and any other conveniences are accessible for all persons, that there is clear, easily visible signage indicating their location, and that the pathway to conveniences are sufficiently wide and clear of impediments and trip hazards.

- If the event is being held at an outdoor site, ensure that the surface is accessible for persons using wheelchairs and scooters.
- If the event is being held at an outdoor site, ensure that trails or paths are marked at their entrances with information about accessibility throughout the trail (e.g. identify the presence at some point on the trail of steps, interruptions of the accessible surface, steep slopes, etc.)
- If the event is being held at an outdoor site, ensure there are areas providing protection from exposure (sun, rain, wind).
- Ensure that if the event venue is going to be closed at a particular time, all transportation arrangements can be accommodated prior to that time (to prevent guests from being stranded in the venue and unable to meet their ride).

Programming

As above: Make materials for the event available in alternate formats, such as an electronic version as well as hard copy, and provide copies (including PowerPoint) in advance of the event upon request.

- Are any ushers, seaters, volunteers, etc. informed and aware of accessibility features of the event, and the commitment to accessibility generally? Do they have contact information for a resource in the event of an accessibility problem during the event?
- Provide captioning upon request.
- Provide American Sign Language translation information request. Provide the interpreters with as much information as possible about the event in advance, including its length and program content. Provide copies of speaker's notes, PowerPoints, etc. in advance. Discuss technical language, persons' titles, or any other unique information with the interpreter in advance. Interpreters will often prefer to work in pairs, particularly for events running more than one hour. Discuss the number of interpreters required.
- If you are providing video, ideally it should be captioned, or ASL provided for the video as well.
- If felt markers will be used (e.g., with flip chart paper), ensure they are non-toxic (the odour from many felt markers can trigger reactions for people with chemical sensitivities). Ensure that any invitees and speakers/presenters are aware of this requirement in advance of the event.
- Ensure that the venue is aired out well in advance of the event, to disperse chemicals in the air from construction materials, office supplies, etc.

Catering:

- Ensure that caterers or contractors providing food or drink for the event are able and willing to comply with accommodation requests related to allergens (peanuts, gluten, shellfish, lactose, etc), food sensitivities and preferences (e.g. vegan, vegetarian, etc.)
- Provide food and drink in containers and dishes in containers that do not contain plastic.
- Learn best practices for planning a zero-waste event
- Provide water using pitchers filled with tap water.

- Where individual meals are being served, ensure the accommodated meals are clearly labelled to avoid confusion.
- Preferably provide the accommodated meals first during the food service, to allow for correction in the event of error, but do not 'segregate' the accommodated meals in time (i.e., don't serve the accommodated meals so far in advance that requesters cannot enjoy their meals at the same time as everyone else).
- Ensure that all foods provided in buffet-style presentation do not contain any allergens specifically identified in accommodation requests, to avoid accidental cross-contamination.
- In addition to excluding all specifically identified allergens, ensure that all foods provided in buffet-style presentations are clearly, accessibly labelled to identify potential allergens and food sensitivities / preferences (e.g., vegetarian, vegan, dairy, gluten, nuts, wheat, sugar-free, etc.)

Final Check

Shortly prior to the event, following the event setup, walk through the event site, review the food and program, with this checklist. Consider the experience from the perspective of:

- using a variety of mobility assistance devices,
- accompanied by an assistance dog,
- with low vision,
- with an auditory disability,
- with a chemical sensitivity, etc.

Adapted from Accessible and Inclusive Event Planning by UBC Equity & Inclusion Office, Vancouver, Canada

4.2 Inclusive, practical methodology tips

World Café

Drawing on , the World Café methodology is a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue. Each element of the method has a specific purpose and corresponds to one or more of the design principles.
World Café can be modified to meet a wide variety of needs. Specifics of context, numbers, purpose, location, and other circumstances are factored into each event's unique invitation, design, and question choice, but the following five components comprise the basic model:

1) *Setting*: Create a "special" environment, most often modelled after a café, i.e., small round tables covered with a chequered or white linen tablecloth, butcher block paper, colored pens, a vase of flowers, and optional "talking stick" item. There should be four chairs at each table (optimally) – and no more than five.

2) *Welcome and Introduction*: The host begins with a warm welcome and an introduction to the World Café process, setting the context, sharing the Cafe Etiquette, and putting participants at ease.

3) *Small-Group Rounds*: The process begins with the first of three or more twenty-minute rounds of conversation for small groups of four (five maximum) people seated around a table. At the end of the twenty minutes, each member of the group moves to a different new table. They may or may not choose to leave one person as the "table host" for the next round, who welcomes the next group and briefly fills them in on what happened in the previous round.

4) *Questions*: each round is prefaced with a **question** specially crafted for the specific context and desired purpose of the World Café. The same questions can be used for more than one round, or they may build upon each other to focus the conversation or guide its direction.

5) *Harvest*: After the small groups (and/or in between rounds, as needed), individuals are invited to share insights or other results from their conversations with the rest of the large group. These results are reflected visually in a variety of ways, most often using graphic recording in the front of the room.

Fishbowl

The fishbowl is a method to organise presentations and group discussions that offers the benefits of small group discussions – most notably, a spontaneous, conversational approach to discussing issues – within large group settings. This is done by arranging the room so that the speakers are seated in the centre of the room with other participants sitting around them in a circle watching their conversation 'in the fishbowl.'

Best used in conferences, workshops and town hall-type meetings, the Fishbowl focuses the entire group's attention on a discussion among 3 - 6 people. Other people present become observers, active listeners, and potential participants through a rotation process which reduces the distance between speakers and audience.

The Fishbowl is especially useful as an engaging alternative to PowerPoint presentations or panel discussions, as a way to allow direct conversations with experts, as a means of providing noteworthy participants with a prominent platform while still maintaining interactivity, or for discussing controversial issues that people may feel strongly about. This method requires a facilitator. It is versatile and can be adapted easily (see the multiple Variations below).

Requirements:

- Facilitator and 12-30 people
- Open space or large room with enough space for participants to move around easily
- Chairs (arranged as per illustration below)

- Microphone(s) (optional)
- 45 - 90 minutes
- Optional: Rapporteur

Source of picture: ideaflip.com

The fishbowl method can be used to:

Foster dynamic group interactions and active participation. In large group settings, it is often challenging to engage all participants. With the Fishbowl, one group of participants discusses an issue, while the other group observes the discussion. There is an evolving conversation as participants move in and out of the Fishbowl to share what they know or ask questions. The element of change helps keep participants on their toes wondering who will come in next, and what they will say, and keeps energy levels up.

Discuss or introduce controversial topics. Start the Fishbowl discussion with 3 - 6 people who have diverse views, yet also understand the topic and its pros and cons broadly. The observers will be able to see various facets and viewpoints emerge through the discussion, which facilitates a more objective exploration of the topic and its related issues.

Showcase expert panel discussions. In this case, the Fishbowl begins with a panel discussion among experts or other noteworthy participants, such as high officials or leaders of organisations. The discussion is led by the facilitator. As the panel discusses the issue at hand, observers participate by active listening. An empty chair is placed in the Fishbowl so that any observer can come forward and participate by asking a question or contributing an idea. This contributes to making the panel discussion more relevant and engaging than a panel discussion in the standard format.

Avoid PowerPoint presentations. When there are 3 - 4 presenters who have been invited to share their knowledge on the same theme, the Fishbowl method can provide a breath of fresh air for the audience. Lengthy PowerPoint presentations scheduled back-to-back can easily diminish attention in a workshop, whereas the Fishbowl can set a more informal and dynamic pace and keep interest up (note that the Fishbowl replaces slides with conversation – often a trade-off worth making).

Procedure

1. *Select a Topic*

   Almost any topic is suitable for a Fishbowl discussion. The most effective prompts (questions or texts) do not have one right answer or interpretation, but rather allow for multiple perspectives and opinions. The Fishbowl strategy is excellent for discussing dilemmas, for example.

2. *Set Up the Room*

   A Fishbowl discussion requires a circle of chairs ("the fishbowl") and enough room around the circle for the remaining participants to observe what is happening in the "fishbowl." Sometimes the facilitator places enough chairs for half of the participants in the room to sit in the fishbowl, while other times teachers limit the chairs further. Typically, 4 to 8 chairs allows for a range of perspectives while still giving each participant an opportunity to speak. The observing students often stand around the fishbowl.

3. *Prepare for the Discussion*

   Like many structured conversations, Fishbowl discussions are most effective when students have had a few minutes to prepare ideas and questions in advance.

4. *Discuss Norms and Rules*

   There are many ways to structure a Fishbowl discussion. Sometimes facilitators introduce a limit for participants to sit in the inner circle for ten to 15 minutes before announcing "Switch," at which point the listeners enter the fishbowl and the speakers become the audience. Another common Fishbowl discussion format is the "tap" system, where participants on the outside of the fishbowl gently tap a participant on the inside who has already spoken, indicating that they should switch roles.

   Regardless of the particular rules you establish, make sure they are explained to participants beforehand. You also want to provide instructions for the participants in the audience. What should they be listening for? Should they be taking notes? Before beginning the Fishbowl activity, you may wish to review guidelines for having a respectful conversation. Sometimes facilitators ask audience members to pay attention to how these norms are followed by recording specific aspects of the discussion process, such as the number of

interruptions, examples of respectful or disrespectful language being used, or speaking times (who is speaking the most or the least).

5. *Debrief*

   After the discussion, you can ask participants to reflect on how they think the discussion went and what they learned from it. Participants can also evaluate their performance as listeners and as participants. They could also provide suggestions for how to improve the quality of discussion in the future. These reflections can be in writing, or they can be structured as a small- or large-group conversation.

   More information at facinghistory.org

Active listening guide (case clinic)

Case Clinics guide a team or a group of peers through a process in which a case giver presents a case, and a group of 5-7 peers or team members help as consultants. Case Clinics allow participants to:

- Generate new ways to look at a challenge or question.
- Develop new approaches for responding to this.

Thus, the purpose of a case clinic is to access the wisdom and experience of peers and to help a peer respond to an important and immediate challenge in a better and more innovative way.

Some principles

- Hierarchy does not matter in this group setting. All are equal peers
- The case giver owns the problem – I do not have to take over for him/her. As a peer I am listening and sharing my experience.
- We are thinking together as a group
- Set-up should allow for undisrupted work environment

Process steps

1) *Casting – distributing roles (approx. 5 min)*

- Select case giver and a facilitator/timekeeper
- Case giver: Shares his/her question/problem statement or challenge that is current,
- concrete, and important, and that he/she has a say in (e.g., we are working on a NAMA idea yet have no idea where to start with the stakeholder engagement).
- Case giver should be able to present the case in approx. 20 min and the case should stand to benefit from the feedback of the peers.

- Coaches: Listen carefully — do not try to “fix” the problem, but listen carefully to the case
- Giver. Share their experiences, their thoughts, and new ideas
- Facilitator/Timekeeper: One of the coaches should be the facilitator who guides the group through the process and manages the time

2) *Intention statement by case giver (approx. 20 min)*.

- Describe the current situation:
- What key challenge or question are you up against?
- What are you aiming for?
- What have you done so far?
- Where do you need input or help?
- Coaches listen deeply and may ask clarifying questions (don’t give advice)

3) *Defining a problem statement or question approx. 10 -15 min.*

- Case giver and coaches should jointly define a question or problem statement that should be answered/be discussed – here the guiding principle is: the more precisely the question is formulated the better the brainstorming and advice can be given.
- After formulating a question or problem statement the facilitator should double-check with the case giver once more “will the answers to this question/problem statement help you? Is that what you are looking for”.
- It is ok to take some time for this step as it will determine the discussion afterwards.

4) Consultation from the coaches approx. 30 Min.

- The case giver remains silent in this phase! He/she should just listen!
- The coaches brainstorm ideas/ solutions to this question or problem statement. They are discussing amongst themselves and one of the coaches writes the ideas down on a flipchart. This should be a creative process – it is not about agreeing what is the best solution or the one way forward yet a brainstorming of different ideas and options.
- Case giver thanks all coaches for their ideas and inputs!

5) Case giver selects ideas to further work on approx. 15 Min.

- The case giver briefly reflects on the brainstorming session he/she followed in silence. This is not about “justification” (we have tried that already) or about “explaining” (we wanted to do this but…)
- It is about a reflection of what he/she has heard. Which ideas or options are appealing? Which are new? Which freshest thoughts have emerged?

6) Group work on selected ideas/ processes/ options (given steps 4 and 5)

- Case giver and coaches now select ideas/ options/thoughts or a process which they would like to jointly work on in the next hours (e.g., designing an inclusive stakeholder engagement process or thinking through steps 1-5 of the NAMA process etc.)
- Here the NAMA steps might be used as guidelines
- Guiding questions on some NAMA process aspects might be helpful
- Maybe further input is needed
- The thoughts and the work should be visualised (pin board) so that the case giver can use it afterwards. Furthermore, we will use this visualisation for a walkthrough gallery in the plenary on day 3 (afternoon)

7) *What is next*

- After finishing step 6 the facilitator should ask the case giver "What is next" and ask to formulate 2-3 concrete next steps within the next weeks. These can be small or big steps depending on the case.
- Afterwards the facilitator can extend the question to all coaches as well.

8) *Feedback and closing*

- The group should take some minutes to provide feedback on the process of the case clinic.
- What worked well? What did they like? What would they recommend for another case clinic?
- And they should close their sub-group with a round of appreciation or words of thanks

4.3 Inclusive activities for children

Make a Sensory Bottle
Fill an old plastic bottle with a mixture of water, glitter and a few drops of food coloring to create an impressive toy for your child. Throw in some buttons or marbles and then close the lid tightly using a heat gun. This activity is a very simple way to help your child learn to focus on something and stay focused.

Make Drawings of Various Coins

A timeless, classic activity that even adults can engage in. Simply collect a few different coins, place a sheet of paper on top and use crayons to scratch a colorful pattern on the paper. Children with autism will love the patterns while developing hand-eye coordination skills.

Bonus tip: Ask friends or family who travel abroad to lend you any coins they've collected and talk to your child about these places.

Edible Thread Jewelry and Sweets

Use cords and licorice to create beautiful necklaces and bracelets. Encourage your child to improve their motor skills by threading through cereal with holes in the middle and other colorful sweets. Once finished, tie the ends in a knot. Your child will be delighted with their modern (and delicious) creation.

Create a Sensory Collage

Children with autism can often be bothered by strange textures and sensations. Ease your child into messier activities by making a tactile collage, choosing new materials like foil, glitter, and magazine clippings. Over time the preschooler may begin to enjoy a wider range of textures.

Incredible Ice Painting

This fun and easy science experiment is sure to stimulate your child's curious mind. Pour different colored acrylic paints into an ice cube tray and place craft sticks in each section. Once they are frozen, remove the paints and let your child create beautiful designs by swirling the melted "icicle" on the paper.

Boost Your Brain with a Smell Game

Fill small containers (old, painted, jam jars work best) with a mixture of aromatic ingredients such as lavender, coffee or soap. Close them at the top using a piece of cloth and a rubber band, then ask your child to identify the different smells. Children with autism love learning about their senses and the roles they play in exploring their environment.

Make Matching Games

Matching games are a fun way to enhance your child's learning. Try placing 10-15 different printed words on one side of a table and ask your child to match those words with their pictures on the other side of the table. You can easily modify this activity to go along with what your child is learning at school using foods, animals, or numbers.

Activities with numbers

Children with autism often have few interests. However, many are particularly attracted by numbers. Due to their age, they are usually not able to understand the reasoning behind the calculations, but they love to play with the objects. Plus, they're really fascinated by impressive objects, so you can stimulate their natural interest in numbers by giving them nice toys. An example would be water and detergent bubbles and having your child count them.

You can also do sorting activities based on the different shapes or colours. This will help your little one to learn about categories and list objects. To do this, you can use large pieces of LEGO, paintings, small animals, or balls. This type of activity broadens children's interests and encourages them to interact with other people around them.

Music therapy for children with autism

Music therapy is one area that can help with behavioural development. Musical expression works in non-verbal language and promotes channels of communication. This is especially true for those who struggle with expressive functions, such as children with autism spectrum disorder.

These activities focus on promoting emotional development and individual expressions. This is evidenced by this report published in the Cochrane Plus Library in 2008. So you and your child can play together in a way that will help your child recognize their own body sounds.

For example, their laughter, clapping or yawning. Identification is the first step in control. That's why you need to sit with your child and repeat the actions that cause these sounds. Then you and your child can work to name and give meaning to them.

Another interesting activity is to teach your child a short, repetitive song with you that includes body gestures. The goal is to get your little one interested in trying to learn the song while also enjoying the whole process.

Imitation games

Reproducing or imitating a particular behaviour can help your child better understand the world around them. This can help them develop their social skills. This is proven through this research conducted by professionals from the Ibero-American University of Puebla, Mexico.

It is important that activities are accompanied by positive reinforcement. You also need to be patient and don't expect your little one to understand on the first try.

An interesting imitation game to try is to draw daily movements like combing your hair, brushing your teeth, eating, etc. and make your child imitate them. You can also draw animals and teach your child the sound they make.

Then you can try showing your child the animal drawings and asking him to make the sounds and movements of the animals. Since any activity that involves repetition is

beneficial, you can also find your own activities based on your child's interests. This will make them even more exciting for your child.

Physical activity

Physical activity helps improve your child's psychomotor skills and relationship with their environment. Studies show that physical well-being improves the quality of life of people with autism. Therefore, the ideal situation is to get your child outside to exercise with other children. However, if this is not possible, you can also create an obstacle course at home with soft toys or create a treasure hunt that involves running, jumping, bending, and crawling. It is important that your child enjoys these activities so that they do not lose interest. Therefore, it is important to tailor the activities to suit your child's interests and needs.

We hope that these exercises for children with autism will help improve your child's development and social inclusion, while also allowing you to spend quality time together