



parent'r'us
school parent involvement to
increase student achievement

Parent'R'Us Awareness Raising Tool for Community/ NGO stakeholders

Key messages:

- Community organisations play an important role as mediators between schools and disadvantaged parents.
- For this work to be successful, community organisations and NGOs need to understand the roles and duties of both schools and parents.

The role of parents in educating their children and their relation to school

Parents are the primary educators of their children. This not only means that they are the first educators, but research also shows that they have the largest impact on the learning – including school learning – of their children. This primary role is present until the age of 11-12 when it is overtaken by the peer group. Contrary to common belief, it is never the teacher who has the largest impact.

At the same time, parents are also responsible for the education of their children, and the school's role is a supporting one. Most parents want the school to help with some of their educator duties, mostly 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 successes, and encourage schools to abandon all practices, e.g. homework that require the active support of parents. **In order to really support disadvantaged children for school success, you should promote 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.

NGOs and community actors as facilitators on parent-teacher partnerships

First and foremost, **community organisations and NGOs can offer safe third physical spaces where teachers and parents can meet and build their partnership.**

You might be more familiar with the culture, language, practices and traditions of disadvantaged families in your community, and thus you can play a role in making teachers understand these communities. In some cases community actors can also act as 'interpreters'. Even if parents and teachers speak the same language, they may have differing vocabularies, and teachers often use professional jargon.

As a community organisation parents trust, you can actively reach out to disadvantaged, vulnerable parents and offer them your support as well as peer mentoring using the Parent'R'Us mentoring model.

Facilitating and supporting the engagement of vulnerable, "problematic" parents as equal partners

You can be the bridge between parents and schools. For this, you may want to:

- Support teachers in understanding their own limits, and help them in their professional development;
- Support parents by offering them answers to challenges they face at school.

The Parent'R'Us model is a perfect tool for this, so you may want to consider training your colleagues to become mentor managers, as well as actively reach out to parents and encourage them to become mentors and help others.

Parent'r'us

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Benefits of PRUS mentoring for parents accompanied by mindset and practice changing measures targeting teachers

Supporting vulnerable families is only successful if it is built on trust. At the same time, it is also important to boost the self-esteem of vulnerable parents and help them become conscious, equal partners at school. The Parent'R'Us mentoring model is an exceptionally good tool for achieving this, while it can also be a successful and affordable policy tool. By community organisation representatives as well as teachers to act as mentor managers, and subsequently trainers of parent mentors, the approach provides a very effective approach to renewing a mentor pool of upcoming generations of parents.

The Parent'R'Us mentoring model foresees peer mentoring from parent to parent that supports an equitable parent engagement policy in two ways. On the one hand, mentors – who are parents coming from the same disadvantaged background as mentees – are acknowledged and rewarded as successful role models for their community when they choose to become mentors. On the other hand, mentees see a role model in the mentor parent who

is very similar to them, offering them an easy role model to follow. As vulnerable parents often do not trust authority, including teachers, for various reasons, this approach is especially suitable for reaching out and engaging them by building back trust via a peer they trust and easily identify with.

Your mentor parents can also act as mentors, coaches and trainers for teachers, but also for your own staff to help appreciate disadvantaged parents and to build partnerships with them. They can be the bridge, especially when there are major cultural differences between teachers and parents.

Providing a safe, neutral space for parent-teacher partnerships

The local school may reach out to you and ask for your help, but you **can also be proactive in building relationships** if you feel that vulnerable parents in your community cannot find the way to collaborate with the school.

Many of these parents have bad experiences with their own schooling, and don't feel comfortable in the school as a physical space. Your community space can be an alternative.



Many of these parents work unusual hours and are not available at the 'usual' times for parent-teacher discussions. You may offer an alternative time.

Many of these parents don't speak the language of instruction. You may provide a space that offers interpretation.

Many teachers feel uncomfortable having to learn from parents with a much lower socio-economic status. You may offer training, coaching and co-mentoring with parent mentors in your own venue for a more relaxed professional development.

You may offer child care that disadvantaged parents cannot afford or organise to make the dialogue between parents and teachers possible.



www.parentrus.eu

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