

### 3.5 Four seasons for co-operation

The Teacher Training Centre (ODN) in Poznan is undertaking multiple efforts to prepare teachers to cooperate with parents in order to avoid any misconduct or misbehaviour problems with students.

Due to the demands and expectations that school faces nowadays, we offer a broad band of courses in the area of improving abilities and enriching knowledge as far as encouraging the proper attitudes to a society-friendly school based on a proper social relationship is concerned.



#### Target group

Head teachers of the student group in schools of all types / then parents.

#### Aims

Aims creating a good parents school cooperation on the basis of:

- Systematic open lessons for the parents
- Mutual dealing with school /class everyday life issues
- Implementation of individual consultation
- Talks and competent advisory
- Openness and trust between teachers and parents
- Proper documentation of meetings

## Assumptions

The pro-society climate of school is created by all its entities like Teachers, Students and Parents. We want to encourage teachers to gain all the abilities necessary to undertake different educational activities.

The ways and means with which school influences young people are relevant for their future choices. Parents have the most influence on the upbringing of their children and this is what they are responsible for.

The school's task is to support parents in order to reach this goal.

## Notes

The programme consists of 4 units (at least one-hour meetings)

Each meeting is concluded with an evaluation and written hints for improved cooperation.

A variety of topics discussed during the course is a good starting point for further cooperation and good communication between teachers and parents on difficult and important matters.

## Leaders

- In ODN the course is held by teacher consultants
- Leaders in schools should be head teachers who are familiar with issues that are important for the students and enrich mutual understanding

## Key information

Attending this course, teachers will be well prepared for parent – school cooperation. The proposed programme assumes that parents will have a possibility

- to attend educational and didactic activities
- to discuss current matters of their children
- to invite some experts who are competent to solve their problems

## Evaluation

- the sheet attached below is a programme evaluation in ODN
- those teachers who run the programme can share their remarks in the ODN brochure "Better Teaching "

## Sessions in practice

Autumn	Winter	Spring	Summer
Help for the parents	School open to environment	Multiculturalism at school	Addiction-free life
Parental meeting integration, introduction, adaptation, book rentals	Christmas time (see attached app.) Parents are eager to cooperate and feel responsible for it	Extra lessons conducted by parents, e.g. foreign languages, manual work, language courses for parents National customs and tradition (see attached app.)	Eliminating risk factors Free time activities Choosing new school, coping with examination stress
Presenting offers and expectations for co-operation /Recognition students and parents	Motivation and ways of learning information and counselling	Extra lessons conducted by parents, e.g. foreign languages, manual work, language courses for parents	About the values meeting with an educator, counselling and promoting healthy life-style

### Aims

- As the final effect of the course parents will:
- experience cooperation in problem-solving process
  - understand that all parents face similar problems
  - become aware that they can count on support of other parents, tutors and experts
  - strengthen their consciousness about taking responsibility for the activities undertaken for the sake of their children

### Final effects

- Teachers will be familiar with the know-how on parent-teacher cooperation
- tutor-parent agreement on the rules of proceedings
  - workshop exercises
  - acquiring negotiation skills in problem solving

### Methods

- multimedia presentations prepared by teachers
- group workshop
- discussion
- brainstorm

### Materials

- paper sheets of different size, markers, stickers
- meeting scenario copy available for every parent
- multimedia presentations- among others “Four seasons”

## Session 1: I Help for the parents

### Aims

- support
- advice in solving learning problems

### Subject

- Motivation for learning

### Getting prepared for the meeting

Leader:

- presents a multimedia presentation
- opens a discussion
  - o How can we help parents make children independent learners?
  - o How to learn? How to facilitate children learning?
  - o How to cope with education demands and a child's abilities?

#### Step 1 | Meeting scenario

The leader presents short information about the current and further meetings. Presentation of the meeting’s main points. Participants are asked to prepare and share their reflections. During the meeting participants are asked to fill in the chart.

Factors influencing motivation	Benefits of motivation

Participants are asked to elaborate and write down answers to the questions asked above.

## Session 2: School open to environment – A society-friendly school

### Aims

- preparing parents and students to share their experience
- looking for common ways of spending free time
- looking for other partners of cooperation to support school and parents
- recognizing mutual expectations about parent-teacher cooperation

### Teacher prepares for the meeting

- stickers and big sheets of paper
- permanent markers

### Meeting scenario

All the participants think of and write down valuable ways of spending free time. A catalogue is created with wishes about things which can be done for the sake of the school and students.

The participants co-operate to work out:

- extra lessons conducted by parents, e.g. foreign languages, handcraft or arts, language courses for parents, an hour of reading fairy-tales to children,
- meeting with an educator, counselling concerning possibilities for further education,
- meetings of teachers and parents, and also among parents,
- special monthly meetings with the school head teacher,
- participation in decision making on school life,
- Parents' participation in school activities with their children.

## Session 3: Multiculturalism at school

How to create students' regional, national and European identity in contemporary school – in order to feel self-confident

### Aims

- helping foreign pupils and their parents in adapting to school
- promoting tolerance and acceptance in society
- respect for difference

### Leader prepares

- song lyrics, proverbs, expressions
- permanent markers
- big sheets of paper

### Meeting scenario

Teachers/ then parents collect proverbs and folk songs which are typical of their culture:

- preparing and editing texts
- learn new songs, poems, proverbs and stories in order to teach the children
- bring along and show some typical items and food from their countries in order to share their national customs and tradition – ceremonies, cuisine, folklore, art
- finding information about spending holidays and special celebrations like weddings, anniversaries etc.
- how to plan events relating to the nationality of children attending the school (one day for each nationality)

- Step 1:** Participants elaborate the description of a chosen custom or tradition of a culture.
- Step 2:** Participants are asked to show one chosen event typical of the country of their origin.
- Step 3:** Create collage posters which portray the different culture influence on every day life.
- Step 4:** Participants think of different ways of spending free time in the family. As a result the participants create a poster with different possibilities (important to keep in mind the child's age)

## Session 4: An addiction-free life – Children's health

### Aims

- promotion of a healthy lifestyle
- addiction prevention

### Getting prepared for the meeting

Leader:

- Either a teacher or an invited expert presents a short characterisation of ADHS, FAS and other illnesses as impediments to working in groups and school learning
- The 21st century illnesses – obesity, anorexia etc.
- Prevention alcohol, smoking, drugs, TV, computer, internet
- Presentation of values which limit the risk of addiction
- Participants are given sheets of paper with the names of different values

### Meeting scenario

The teacher starts a discussion on how to prevent illnesses influenced by external factors. The participants name the illnesses which their children have developed and discuss their reasons and results. Possible prevention is considered. Among all the factors causing addiction parents mainly note the shortage of time for their children, rush and tension in their everyday life. Sometimes they mention the bad economic conditions of the family and a lack of means to protect the children from bad influences. Free-time activities are abundant but the time shared is rare, children are overloaded with extra courses and they are not praised for their effort. Instead parents' criticism and high expectations are present. Children's non-stop TV watching and internet browsing are out of control. The responsibility for the upbringing is often passed over to the school.

Just like adults, such children are unable to ask for help as they are afraid that their requests will be difficult to respond to.

- Step 1:** What are the far-reaching results of the lack of time for children?  
Participants in small groups list possible results:  
Lack of communication  
Educational problems  
Absence  
Early sexual initiation  
Addictions
- Step 2:** Teachers prepare themselves to schedule activities for the children with the parents.  
Each participant takes a label with a value and tries to name its characteristic properties and thinks about its practical application for children at various ages.

Below possible examples of value characteristics:

## Values

### Aims

reinforcement of the ability of the grown-ups to promote values  
practical training for work with the young people

### Respect

We teach children how to show respect, what vocabulary we should use. We list phrases with which we can express respect. We also point to those people who deserve respect.

### Honesty

Children are asked to share their experience if they have ever met dishonesty and what they felt like.

Elder students are asked to comment on truancy in respect to honesty

### Responsibility

We talk about the effect when somebody doesn't keep his/her word, fulfil a task or is not responsible for his/her work

Children get a task to plant a flower and take care of it with full responsibility. Those students whose plants grow well are praised.

### Bravery

When a student is asked by his peers to do something improper, something that his/her parents had forbidden him/her to do (e.g. going to an internet café). Here this choice of rejection is bravery but what are its positive and negative consequences?

### Optimism, Happiness, Sense of humor

Children look for good and bad news in newspapers.

They discuss happy teacher and student characteristics.

### Justice

We talk with children about people who are responsible for obeying regulations. Do they feel that the way they are treated at school is just? Is it fair that someone doesn't give back a borrowed copy-book?

### Beauty

Different kinds of beauty. Students are asked to bring beautiful pictures. They need to justify their choice. Children get a task to paint the world with and without beauty. Common exercises to create beautiful things (e.g. stained glass)

### Friendship and love

We ask children to have a chat with their parents about friendship and love. We listen to songs and read poems.

### Wisdom

Children make a list of famous wise people and describe their characteristics.

They try to find some of these features in themselves.

**Exercise 3** – Participants are asked to create together a collage from some prepared press cuttings about values. The parents can share this activity with children at home. Children bring prepared posters (the final result of their common work) to school.

### Final summary

During elementary school time most parents are very much involved in their child's schooling. They know and meet with teachers and administrators, are aware of their child's progress and behaviour, help solve problems, and make their children spend enough time on homework.

Unfortunately, when children enter secondary school, some parents stop being as actively involved, as if their help and support were no longer needed. This is very true about most parents' behaviour.

Although your teenage child becomes more independent and is increasingly involved in activities outside the family, you should and must remain the most influential person in his/her life. Through your involvement in school and extra-curricular activities, you can do much to help your child believe in the value and importance of education. Through such parental support children can be enthusiastic about learning and achieve academic success.

### The best advice for parents

*Help your child manage homework time.*

*Show interest in her/his studies by talking with him/her daily about what he or she is studying and doing in school.*

*Listen to your child's ideas and feelings about school, studies and activities and discuss them.*

*Both you and your child should read and review the information that schools and districts provide.*

*Contact counsellors, administrators and teachers frequently.*

*Be sure that your child attends school on a regular basis.*

*Encourage him/her to pursue interests and make friends through extracurricular activities.*

*Get to know his/her friends. This a wonderful time of their lives but you must be the parent and lead them through it.*

*Make it clear that he/she must follow school rules and policies.*

*Attend parent meetings e.g. parent education groups and other activities for parents.*

Modification of a parent's attitude enables mutual understanding between teachers and parents. But above all, it is students who benefit most from such modification. They improve their functioning at school and other achievement.

Time	Teachers' needs	parents offer
<b>Teachers and parents create an atmosphere of mutual trust and community.</b>		
Autumn	Recognizing students and parents	Attending school meetings
	Presenting offers and expectations for co-operation	Presenting offers and expectations for co-operation
Winter	Teachers are prepared for cooperation	Parents are eager to cooperate and feel responsible for it
Spring	Meeting with an educator, counselling concerning possibilities of further education	extra lessons conducted by parents, e.g. foreign languages, handcraft, arts, language courses for parents
Summer	Everybody rests	

## The following traditions in winter offer special occasions to involve parents

### Christmas time

Christmas time is the biggest holiday for Polish people. Christmas Eve is called "Wigilia". They meet together in one of the family members' houses and eat Christmas Eve supper at about 5 – 7 p.m. (or as soon as the first star appears in the sky). Carp, pierogies, bigos are among the most popular dishes. Traditionally, there should be 12 different kinds of food. People pray before eating, then share the so-called "Oplatek" and make wishes. For each Polish person this time is very joyful, but they don't forget about their past relatives either they leave one empty chair for an unexpected guest. So if you are homeless, you will be welcomed by every Polish family to join the meal. This is a great Polish tradition.

### The Meaning of Oplatki (Christmas Wafers)

An especially popular custom is the sharing of the "Oplatek" or Christmas wafer, also known as "Anielski Chleb" or Angel Bread.

For the people of Poland and other Western Slavonic nations the "Oplatek" has always had a mystical quality.

The "Oplatek" is much like the unleavened wheat hosts used at Mass. Different Christmas scenes are embossed in the baking process.

### Harvest Celebration – Dożynki

As a country with many agricultural traditions, Poland still continues to celebrate harvest festivals each year from mid-August through mid-September.

Villagers would dress in colorful folk costumes singing and playing instruments. In celebration of the completed harvest, they carried wreaths made of corn, wheat and a variety of flowers. A loaf of bread, baked from the fresh grain, was also presented. The people then danced and sang songs.

### Polish Folk Art



Wycinanki, pronounced (Vee-chee-non-key), are Polish decorative paper cut-outs which are regarded by many as the most beautiful in the world. The Wycinanki on display at the museum were made

by hand in Poland with sheep-shearing scissors. They were used to decorate the walls of ceiling beams in countryside cottages and given as gifts to family members and friends. The colorful cut-outs of flowers, circles and stars with a symmetrical arrangement reflect a particularly high level of artistry.

➔ <http://www.polishamericancenter.org/Wycinanki.htm>

Polish regional dress:

➔ <http://www.polishamericancenter.org/PolishDress.htm>

### Literature

„Z dzieckiem w świat wartości” I. Koźmińska, E. Olszewska, Świat Książki, Poznań 2007

„Prawdziwe szczęście w praktyce” D. BartkowskaNowak, B. Białecka, Wyd. Św. Wojciecha, Poznań 2008

„Wychowywać to kochać i wymagać”, Zeszyty metodyczne nr 2, CMPP-P Warszawa 2006

### 3.5.1 Evaluation: Four seasons for cooperation

#### Part A: Description of the evaluation period

##### 1. Participation

Number of schools	4
Number of participants (teachers, class teachers, methodologists, school administration)	145
Type of school	Primary and secondary schools
Number of teacher training courses	6

##### 2. Testing conditions

a) How were the staff motivated for taking part in the evaluation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informative meetings·</li> <li>• Interview with school administration·</li> <li>• Surveys for teachers·</li> <li>• Problem seminars</li> </ul>
b) Which persons were informed and finally took part in the evaluation ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The schools authorities·</li> <li>• Teachers·</li> <li>• Class teachers (in classes where migrant children study)·</li> <li>• Social teachers</li> </ul>
c) How much time was spent on informative meetings and interview?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 hours each meeting·</li> <li>• 2-3 hours for an interview</li> </ul>
d) How long was the evaluation period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April, September, October</li> </ul>

### 3. Testing Process

#### a) description of the evaluation process-

- after the informative meetings with teachers of Perm schools and interviews there were chosen several schools the staff of which displayed interest and participated in the evaluation (school 5 in Krasnokamsk, school 2 in Kungur, school in Karagai, schools in Perm, extra-classes education institution)-
- during the teacher training seminar we were organised. At the seminars teachers shared their attitudes to the module. For them the project materials were translated into Russian and slide presentations were prepared.

Six teacher training courses with 145 participants were carried out. The school teams which took part in testing “4 seasons of cooperation” highly appreciated the approach of the Polish colleagues. Particularly, they stated that

- if the cooperation with parents is organised in a rhythm-like format (as seasons of the year) it makes it (the cooperation) more attractive and motivating. Parents find it good that they know beforehand the time of school meetings and can plan their visits to school.
- In this project one can see the roles and contributions of both: teachers and parents to mutual benefit.
- Participants of the seminar added their own ideas and materials. For example they suggested introducing this module for the whole school at all school levels. So that there are seasonal meetings with parents for all classes.

#### b) What parts of the original project had to be adapted/changed/omitted for testing?

1. themes of the activities for teachers and parents may vary in accordance with the demands of children of a certain age. For example, for 1st –year students’ parents it is essential to know about the class curriculum, school standards, teachers. For senior students’ parents it is important to learn about future exams and how to help children get prepared for them.
2. for piloting schools we agreed to work out parents’ school plans of cooperation based on the ideas of 4 seasons.3.

## Part B: Project evaluation

### 4. Description of observances

a) What reactions of teachers were observed? A general reaction of evaluation participants is positive and enthusiastic. The teaching staff liked the idea of arranging family-school interrelation in the 4-seasons-rhythm. Thus parents get used to regular meetings and are aware of what will be discussed.

b) How did the parents react?

### 5. Evaluation by participants

a) Does the teaching staff recommend to take over the module?

Yes  No

Comment: during the short period of evaluation it became clear that the approaches of the "4 seasons cooperation" will be taken over and implemented in schools as a compliment to already existing schemes of cooperation between families and school.

#### Summary of experiences

Though the evaluation period was rather short, we believe that the main ideas of the project will be put into practice by piloting schools. We managed to motivate schools (schools which migrant children attend) to facilitate parental involvement by establishing the scheme of regular meetings/ visits to school within 4 seasons.