

4 Toolbox: How to build the bridge

Effective cooperation is expected to produce increased involvement of the parents in the education of their children, resulting in better prerequisites for a successful school career. It is especially in transitions (pre-school, school etc) that a successful cooperation between school and home must prove its worth. Sustainably effective cooperation must be firmly anchored in the schools' structures in the school-to-school transition periods and set in motion through the implementation of understandable and easily accessible support courses, measures and projects. Attention should be paid to overcoming the barriers documented in the literature, like, for instance, "mutual language problems and cultural otherness" ¹.

"Starting out from the question of the effect of different characteristics of social background on school transition following primary school, a longitudinal study of 27 primary school classes in Bavaria was used to investigate the course of transition from parents' educational aspirations, school recommendations by teachers and actual registration at a particular secondary school. Besides looking at the question of the match between a pupil's school results and their school recommendation, the effects of background were assessed at different stages of the decision-making process. The final allocation of pupils to the various school types correlates clearly with the social background of pupils. This analysis of the separate decisional steps highlights the higher significance of primary than secondary impacts of social background on allocation to school type" ².

The modules in this toolbox serve to support the cooperation between school and parents, and offer a whole range of methods for use in INSET.

¹ (cf. Eberding und Schepker 1995 in: http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Publikation/B/Anlagen/f_C3_B6rderung-migranten-sekundarstufe-1,property=publicationFile.pdf)

² Ditton, H. and Krüsken, J., Lehrstuhl Allgemeine Pädagogik, Erziehungs- und Sozialisationsforschung, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Leopoldstr. 13, 80802 München, Germany

4.1 Empowering Parents

In many families the topic of homework plays an important role. To better cooperate with the parents, it is necessary to come to an understanding in individual schools on homework and explain it to the parents.

What role do the parents play? Views differ on this point. They range from asking the parents not to 'interfere' to the development of worksheets with instructions for the parents on how to help their children.

The reasons for these discrepancies may be:

- the function that homework may or may not have,
- school specifics and parent specifics,
- the understanding of the cooperation between parents and school,
- the pragmatic insight that well-educated parents will help anyway and so the less educated have to be helped to do the same for their kids..

Looking at a decision from all points of view

To help decide on this issue, materials are offered in the following for school staffs. Methodologically, a variation on the "Six thinking hats" method is offered (see [↪ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Thinking_Hats](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Thinking_Hats)).

Sitting in a circle, the participants follow role cards, arguing for and against. The arguments thus collected are subsequently weighted. Additions to the role cards can, of course, be made.

Learning out of school – homework policy

The questions listed under "How to set up a school homework policy" will help to formulate an own school homework profile. The language of the formulated concept should be kept understandable.



Role cards

Expectations of and roles for parents



Home and school must work together

When a child goes to school, the responsibility for its education is shared equally according to the constitution. In individual cases, this may cause difficulties "I don't want to have anything to do with homework. That's what school is for". This attitude is just as irresponsible as that of a teacher who said: "The parents must make sure the homework is done the way I say. Otherwise, they must take the consequences".



Inform the teacher

Homework can help children to practise what they have learnt. They can set their own speed of work, find their own answers and internalize what they have learnt. If a child gets stuck, it must be allowed to break off and the parents can inform the teacher, asking him or her to explain the task the next time. Teachers appreciate that. Homework can help the kids to get organized and learn to stand on their own two feet.



Homework Learning Centre

The Learning Centre is a program which provides students with a quiet place to do their homework, get help, and to have access to library resources. The Learning Centre will be supervised by a teacher and peer tutors who can provide homework assistance and guidance.



Providing information to parents on what is being taught in school and suggesting activities to support this at home

Children are expected to benefit from homework, which provides practice and an opportunity to consolidate learning. The setting of homework is also recognised as a valuable way of involving parents in their children's schoolwork.

Parents who do not speak English or are not literate in English clearly need to know how to support their child, and wherever possible, the teacher should structure tasks in such a way that parents are able to understand what is expected and how they can help. Teachers should ensure that parents understand how to support their children's homework.

How to set up a school homework policy

Homework policies are likely to include the following paragraphs:

- the purpose of homework
- the amount and type of homework appropriate at different stages
- the importance of feedback to pupils on the quality of their work
- how parents and teachers can get feedback
- the recommended time allocation per day/week for different types of pupils and subjects
- the need for differentiation
- homework for pupils with special educational needs
- how homework will be co-ordinated and monitored
- the role of parents and carers and the steps that will be taken to support parents
- assessment arrangements
- arrangements for monitoring and evaluating
- the management roles

⇒ <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/atoz/h/homework/index.cfm?code=mode>

Examples

Giles Juniors School - Homework Policy

⇒ <http://www.gilesjm.herts.sch.uk/curriculumplans/homeworkpolicy.htm>

Sir Graham Balfour School – Homework Policy

⇒ http://www.involve-migrants-improve-school.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sir_Graham_Balfour_School_Homework_Policy_1_.pdf

Sources

Inform the teacher:

Bei Schwierigkeiten mit den Hausaufgaben eine Nachricht an die Lehrerin

⇒ http://www.elternbildung.at/eb/download/elternbriefe/Elternbriefe_5.pdf

Home and school must work together:
Elternhaus und Schule müssen zusammenwirken

⇒ <http://www.rumpfs-paed.de/Familienerziehung/Lernen%20f%FCr%20die%20Schule.htm>

Providing information to parents on what is being taught in school and suggesting activities to support this at home

⇒ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/06/09/07091311/19>

The teacher's responsibility:
Die Verantwortung des Lehrers

⇒ <http://www.erziehungstrends.de/Hausaufgaben>

Parents as teaching assistants:
Eltern als Hilfslehrer

⇒ <http://www.learnline.nrw.de/angebote/gsanforderungen/modulM2/phase1.html>

Parents shouldn't help with the homework:
Eltern sollen nicht bei Hausaufgaben helfen

⇒ <http://www.uni-protokolle.de/nachrichten/id/62887/>

Homework Learning Centre

⇒ <http://wms.schoolloop.com/hwlearningcenter>

Parents as Learning Aides

⇒ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/09/07091311/0>

⇒ http://www.elternbildung.at/eb/download/elternbriefe/Elternbriefe_5.pdf, S. 12