

SEQUENCE FOR USING THE TWO TOOLS

To make the process easier to understand, we have included a detailed sequence for using these tools.

Before using the *Inventory of the School's Practices* (appendix 1) to survey the school staff:

- Plan how to lead the meetings with the school staff and main partners by following the guidelines presented in this companion guide.
- We recommend starting with focus area 1.



Using the questions in the *Inventory of the School's Practices* (appendix 1):

- Begin the process of identifying the school's practices with the school staff.



Using the first results-analysis form included in the *Inventory of the School's Practices* (appendix 1):

- Analyze the inventory results.
- Reflect on any action to be taken.



Before collecting information from the parents, using the *Questionnaire for Parents* (appendix 2):

- Choose the most useful focus area(s) in the *Questionnaire for Parents*.
- Plan for the parent meeting by following the guidelines recommended in this document.
(They are also provided on sheets to be found in the left-hand pocket.)



Use the *Questionnaire for Parents* (appendix 2) to:

- Collect information on the focus area(s) to be covered in the parent meetings.



Use the Results-Analysis Forms Related to the *Questionnaire for Parents* (appendix 3) to:

- List and classify the parents' answers and comments on the selected focus area(s).
- Highlight the key points related to the focus area(s).



Use the phase 2 results-analysis form in the *Inventory of the School's Practices* (appendix 1) to:

- Compare the results from the inventory and the questionnaire.
- Plan how to adjust the school's strategies, activities and services.



Adjust and enhance the school's practices, if necessary.

GUIDELINES FOR PRESENTING AND EXPLAINING THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO PARENTS

These guidelines should be adapted to the characteristics of the parents, the school and the community, as well as the focus area(s) selected.

Presenting the focus areas

Each focus area in the questionnaire has an introductory text to be presented to the parents.

Reviewing the part of the questionnaire to be answered by the parents

It would be important to show parents that each of the focus areas in the questionnaire has different sections and to read them with the parents (e.g. the parent-school communication focus area has two sections: "A. What do you think about the communication between parents and the school?" and "B. What do you think could improve communication between parents and the school?"). Show them that each section ends with a space reserved for their comments or suggestions.

Explaining how parents with more than one child in the school should answer the questionnaire

Some schools may call only one parent meeting. If some of the parents have more than one child in that school, the school should clearly explain to the parents whether they need to answer the questionnaire for all or only one of their children.

Reviewing the types of instructions and rating scales found in the questionnaire, according to the selected focus area(s)

To make sure that everyone clearly understands the different instructions they must follow and the rating scales they must use to answer the questions, it is advisable to go over some of the questions with the parents. Examples are given below in the section "Overview of the instructions and rating scales found in the questionnaire." The examples will have necessarily been reviewed and adapted to the focus area(s) selected by the school.

Thanking the parents at the end of the meeting and informing them of the upcoming steps in the process

At the end of the meeting, it will be important to thank the parents for their cooperation and to explain how the school plans to follow up this meeting.

OVERVIEW OF THE INSTRUCTIONS AND RATING SCALES FOUND IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Choosing the appropriate numbers

Some sections of the questionnaire contain either a series of statements to which parents must indicate their level of agreement (e.g. focus area 1, statement 11, "Written documents from the school are easy to understand.") or a series of statements to which parents must indicate how important the idea expressed is to them (e.g. focus area 3, statement 49, "It would be easier for me to volunteer if the school were to show appreciation for my work as a volunteer."). Here, parents must put a check mark, an x or any other sign in the appropriate box to the right of each statement.

Two types of four-point scales are used:

- One indicates the level of agreement with the statement, ranging from "I totally disagree" (represented by 1, the lowest number) to "I totally agree" (represented by 4, the highest number).
- The other indicates the level of importance accorded to the statement, ranging from "Not at all important (represented by 1, the lowest number) to "Very important" (represented by 4, the highest number).

Checking off reasons, topics or activities

Some sections of the questionnaire contain a series of statements from which the parents must choose those that apply. Here, the parents must put a check mark, an x or any other sign in the box to the right of any statement that applies to them (e.g. focus area 3, statement 18 "I do not know anyone at the school."). Some sections contain a series of topics or activities from which the parents must choose those that are of interest to them or their children (e.g. focus area 2, statement 38 "The choice of sports and cultural activities for the children").

Indicating the three most important topics

After parents have checked off a series of reasons, topics or activities (see previous instruction), they must indicate in the three boxes provided, the numbers corresponding to the three items they consider to be the most important. Since many parents tend to check off several reasons, topics or activities, this gives them the chance to choose those that they truly consider to be the most important.

Answering Yes/No questions

Some of the sections of the questionnaire contain a list of Yes/No questions. After reading a statement, often followed by some examples (e.g. focus area 2, statement 23, "The school informs me of how important parent-child relationships are."), the parents must place a check mark, an x or any other sign in either the Yes box or the No box.

Confirming or refuting a statement by answering Yes or No

Some of the sections of the questionnaire contain a list of statements that parents must either confirm or refute. After reading a statement (e.g. focus area 4, statement 3 "I participate in the activities of certain organizations."), parents must place a check mark, an x or any other sign in either the Yes box or the No box.



SUGGESTIONS FOR WELCOMING THE PARENTS AND PRESENTING THE MEETING OBJECTIVE

These suggestions must be adapted to the characteristics of the parents, the school and the community, as well as the selected focus area(s).

Welcoming the parents and introducing those in attendance

"Good evening and welcome to all of you who accepted our invitation. Let me introduce myself. I'm [your name], the [your function in the school or community]. It will be my pleasure to lead this meeting along with [if applicable, name those present, the person taking the minutes of the meeting, those who can provide help with the questionnaires, the interpreters and other resource persons]."

Emphasizing the value of parent participation

"This meeting is very important to us. At [name of the school], we know you play a very important role with your children, and you want them to succeed in life and in school. And so do we. By getting the school and families to work more closely together, we can improve the chances that our young people will enjoy school, feel that we support their efforts, and ultimately succeed."

Stating or recalling the aim of the meeting

"We are currently holding similar meetings with other parents to find out what they think about [state the focus area and explain if necessary]. Members of the school staff are also involved in the same kind of reflection exercise so that we can gain a clearer picture of the state of our school's practices, discover our strengths and find out what we need to improve.

All these meetings will help us discover what our school is already doing, what we can improve, and how we can work more closely with you so that your children can succeed in school. Later on, we'll let you know the results of this survey.

Tonight, we would like to fill out this questionnaire with you, but we'd also like to discuss it with you to gain a fuller picture of our situation. Your ideas and comments are welcome. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions . . . "

Explaining how the meeting will proceed and handing out the questionnaire

"This meeting will last about _____. This is how we thought we might proceed _____. [Explain which scenario has been chosen.]