Schools and Families

Building lasting collaborative relationships

Jill Geissendoerfer   -Kieta, Sangeeta Bordoloi Lama, Rumeysa Ezber and Stephanie Sagmoen Siqueira

Inquiry Question: How can educators build lasting collaborative relationships with families in the face of increasingly diverse classrooms?

What do collaborative relationships with Families look like?
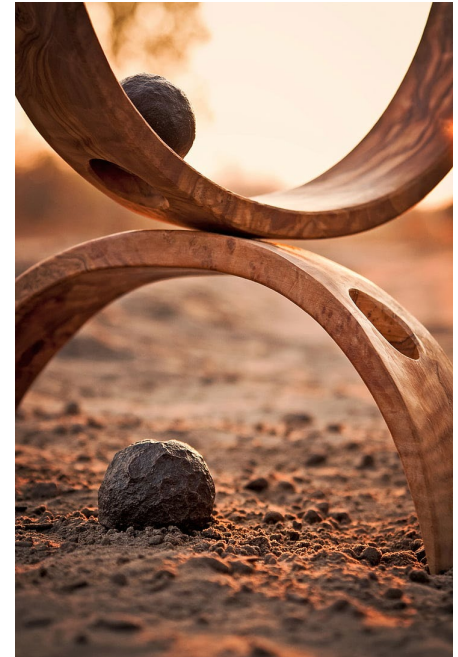## Key criteria

- **Mutual respect**
  - Partnerships with **parents** & legal guardians **benefit the students and value** the **perspectives** they bring to the **learning community.**
  - A **learning community** that **values inclusion** ensures that **all students** are offered **opportunities.**
- **Open communication**
  - They ensure their **dialogue** is open & **honest** so that **learning & teaching** become the **best** they can be.
  - **Strong** collegial **relationships** are developed through **mutual trust** & respect, focusing on **professionalism**, **open communication**, & a **support network.**
- **Shared goal** - the wellbeing & success of the student
  - **Collaboration** demonstrates a **commitment** to the **common goal** of supporting & **reflecting** …&**improving student outcomes.**
  - **Supporting** transdisciplinary learning **requires time** and a commitment to **collaboration**.

(ibo.org, 2018)

What do collaborative relationships with Families look like?
Key criteria

- **Open -minded**
  - Through **sustained collaboration**, members of the learning community **develop** :
    - **Openness** towards other **perspectives**
    - **Engagement** with ideas **different to one's own**
    - **Respect** for the **contribution** of the **other** subjects to the inquiry
    - **Appreciation** for rigour in **debate** & discussion
    - **Appreciation** for **collective interpretation** & **reinterpretation** of knowledge .
- **Collective ownership, responsibility, & accountability**
  - Members **demonstrate agency** through **collective ownership** , responsibility, & **accountability** for learning & teaching, & **transform schools** into **dynamic learning communities.**

- **Commitment**
  - **Supporting** transdisciplinary learning **requires** time & a **commitment to collaboration.**

(ibo.org, 2018)

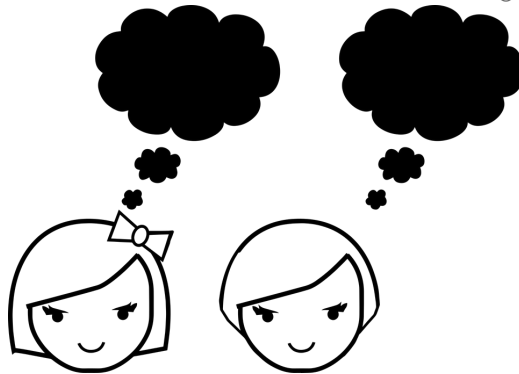# What do collaborative relationships with Families look like?
IDENTIFYING characteristics

- Reflection
  - Cognitive conflict is critical in triggering growth
  - Analyzing arguments
  - Making inferences using deductive reasoning
  - Critical thinking
  - Judging & evaluating
  - Metacognition
  - Self -awareness

- Sustained dialogue
  - Quality of interactions
  - The degree of interactivity & negotiability
  - The extent to which interactions influence participants' thinking
  - Working toward a common goal
  - Misunderstandings force participants to construct explanations , give reasons , & justify their positions

What do collaborative relationships with families look like?
Identifying characteristics

- **Growth**
  - **Strengthened** learning **community**
  - Increased **trust**
  - **Appreciation**
  - Understanding **perspectives**
  - Shared **vision** becomes **clearer**
  - **Better** communication
  - Greater **self-reflection**

- **Transparency**
  - Fosters **trust**
  - **Clear** communication
  - **No hidden agendas**
  - **Equality**
  - **Credibility**

- **IB Learner Profile Attributes**
  - **Open-Minded**
  - Risk-Taker
  - **Reflective**
  - **Communicator**
  - **Balanced**
  - Inquirer
  - Knowledgeable
  - Thinker
  - **Self-Management**

(ibo.org, 2018)

What do collaborative relationships with families look like?
benefits

Benefits to Students

- Strong **foundation** to **support** student **learning** (Sanchez, 2021)
- Increased **student motivation** (Tutt, 2021)
- **Fosters** development of **student agency**

Benefits to the Learning Community

- **Enrichment** through active involvement
- **Shared** decision -making (Sanchez, 2021)
- **Exchange** of ideas
- **Build** on experiences
- Provide **support**

Challenges in building collaborative relationships
Customs and Cultural Perspectives

- Children attend an educational setting with the knowledge, beliefs and values of their families and community from their first teachers: primary caregivers and family members (McGee Banks, 2010).

- These cultural experiences are unique to each child and family and cannot be generalized based on ethnicity, religion or any other factor (Mac Naughton & Hughes, 2011).

- Addi-Raccah and Arviv-Elyashiv (2008) found that some practitioners perceived caregivers' actions and involvement as threatening. A fear of increased power or involvement may stem from a lack of consensus on stakeholder's role.

- This fear has been echoed across English-speaking countries where research is finding that educators are lacking and wanting more or further training on interacting and working effectively with families (Saltmarsh, Barr, & Chapman, 2015).

Challenges in building collaborative relationships
Difference DEnial philosophy

- Dominant educational practices may not be aligned with the child's acquired learning and interacting styles (Murray & O'Doherty, 2004).

- A common response to this is the implementation of a '*difference denial philosophy*', which is based on the false understanding that "all children share a common developmental context" (Murray & O'Doherty, 2004, p. 46) or in more common terms, *we are all the same*.

- For example, child directed learning, the process of self-motivated exploration by a child in an early childhood setting, sets an underlying importance on individualism which is a core belief in many western or minority world cultures though may not represent the beliefs of all children and families (Brooker, 2005).

- The value of diversity is lost when young children's awareness of difference is denied, though it is often done with good intent to acknowledge our shared humanity (Derman-Sparks, 1989).

Challenges in building collaborative relationships
Language

- As the world becomes more and more affected by globalization the diversity of languages in a community grows, affecting how people are able to engage in dialogue. As more languages are introduced into a community, they are also introduced into the educational settings.

- Diversity in languages can be a challenge for educators and families to navigate and address. Often language policies reflect the view of English as the dominant language, and therefore may need to be adjusted to reflect diversities of languages spoken in the community.

- If educators and families do not share a common language it is important that they find ways to communicate, and the supports needed.

- Educators are often limited in their understanding of second language acquisition and are lacking the training needed.

Challenges in building collaborative relationships
Disclosing Personal Information

- Families are unique and often disclosing personal information can be a challenge due to the personal circumstance, the sensitivity of the information or the request for privacy.

- Research has shown that caregivers often do not disclose information about their child's home life, moreover some caregivers found it inappropriate for the education setting to inquire about home life (De Gioia, 2009).

- Though there may be a lack of information shared, educators may begin to privilege the idea of entitlement to information over the rights of families to privacy (Mac Naughton & Hughes, 2011).

- '*Privileging*' is unfair as it assumes a right to information and implies families that do not disclose information are '*bad*'' (Mac Naughton & Hughes, 2011).

Challenges in building collaborative relationships
Time

- Collaboration demonstrates a commitment to the common goal of supporting and reflecting on a transdisciplinary learning experience and improving student outcomes. A collaborative approach involves sustained dialogue and reflection among and between all members of the learning community. This approach helps all members of the learning community to grow as learners and as professionals to improve student outcomes, health and wellbeing.

- As learning communities are diverse, it is important to note the impact of change and challenge on all learners and how all needs are being met and barriers to learning are being addressed). This includes time management, as IB states that there should be regular meetings, that might not fit all the parents or caregivers so it creates challenges while arranging the time.

- The planning process allows for flexibility, adaptation and change throughout the unit of inquiry to accommodate immediate needs and can be simplified in a variety of ways.

- (ibo,2018)

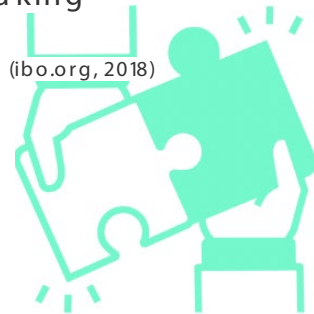# Challenges in building collaborative relationships
resources

The learning community collaborates in policy development, resource planning and allocation, learning space design and culture-building.

<div align="right">(ibo.org, 2018)</div>

- When learning is connected to real-life contexts, students see the relevance of their learning beyond the school. There are valuable experts and resources within and beyond the learning community that can be used to support and enhance learning. For example, parents and extended family members might be able to help with learning inside and outside of the programme of inquiry.Collaboration with members outside the learning community is key to providing students with an authentic learning experience and in helping students making connections from their learning to the real world.

<div align="right">(ibo.org, 2018)</div>

Challenges in building collaborative relationships
resources

Here is an example reflection of a parent who was invited to the class to plan next unit of inquiry under the transdisciplinary theme of 'where we are in place and time'.

"I found the experience a very rewarding and insightful one. It was interesting to see how the teachers approached the planning process. It gave me a much better understanding of the PYP".

Explorers parent (Edyta , 2019)

What do collaborative relationships with families look like? Getting started

What the Teacher can do

- **Initiate dialogue** with families
- **Express interest** in collaboration
- Invite family members' **opinions** and reflection
- **Establish partnerships** among all **stakeholders**
- **Recognition** of what **each member** can **contribute**
- **Recognition** of what can be **accomplished collectively**
- **Living** the **IB Learner Profile**

Opportunities for Parents

- **Focus** and working **groups**
- **Parent** -initiated /led **events**
- School -home **communication journals**
- **Mentoring** for exhibitions
- **Student** learning **diaries** and **portfolios**
- **Learning** exhibitions **celebrations**
- Parent **councils**
- Parent **volunteers**
- Informal **discussions**

(ibo.org 2018)

Teachers' role in building collaborative relationships

- Start by defining expectations and boundaries
- Clearly communicate these expectations and boundaries to families
    - Emphasize that teachers and parents are partners in the students' progress.
- Invite feedback and reflections.
- Reasonable feedback should be met with timely action.
- Get to know families by organizing beginning of the year parent orientation programs.
- Appreciate and celebrate student success in collaboration with families. For example - Teacher sends an appreciation email and families celebrate the success or achievement.

Teachers' role in building collaborative relationships
(Customs, Cultural Diversity and communication)

Culture is something that unites people.

— Anastasiya O., Russia

- Develop and share awareness about the family backgrounds, and culture of the students.
  - Send out beginning of the year questionnaires to families.
  - Gather a wide base of knowledge about the countries and cultures of your prospective students.
  - Follow culturally responsive instruction practices.
  - Celebrate the diversity in the classroom through "Stories around the world" day, "National Dress" day, UN Day of Languages etc.
  - Make families a part of cultural activities in the classroom.

Teachers' role in building collaborative relationships
(Protecting Student data)

Teachers should help families __develop trust and confidence__ in the teaching staff, by demonstrating awareness about data privacy and implementing data safety measures such as:

- **Being safe on social media** - Teachers should have a professional social media account to keep the families and students informed, but this account should have strict privacy settings and students' faces should be blurred out.

  Use encrypted Edtech tools - When using Edtech websites, teachers should ensure that data is stored and transmitted securely.

  Check each tool's privacy policy - Ensure that the tools used in a classroom have privacy guidelines and contracts that are in line with the school's data safety guidelines.

  Be transparent with families and students - At the beginning of the year, give the classroom community, a list of the Edtech tools and websites that will be used in class together with a link to their privacy policy.

  Have a plan in place for mistakes - Give parents a list of steps that will be taken if there is a data breach or misuse of any information.

Together
may we give
our children
the roots to
grow
and the
wings
to fly

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