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Cooperation Between Teachers and Parents in Shaping a Positive School Climate

*Współpraca nauczycieli i rodziców w kształtowaniu
pozytywnego klimatu w szkole*

Abstract: School climate is the quality of school life that consists of relationships, norms, values, expectations, and a sense of security. How a student perceives their school and how they feel about it shapes their commitment to learning and achieving. The most important element shaping a positive classroom climate is the relationship between the student and the teacher. The teacher should be a supportive figure who assures the student that they can achieve set goals and that they can count on them if a problem arises. The engagement of parents in school life is also a crucial element that contributes to a positive school climate. Parents' collaboration with the school community can boost students' performance.

Keywords: school climate; teachers; family; school

Abstrakt: Klimat w szkole to jakość szkolnego życia, na który składają się relacje, normy, wartości, oczekiwania i poczucie bezpieczeństwa. To, w jaki sposób uczeń postrzega swoją szkołę oraz jak się w niej czuje, kształtuje jego zaangażowanie w naukę oraz osiągnięcia. Najważniejszym elementem kształtującym pozytywny klimat w klasie są relacje ucznia i nauczyciela. Nauczyciel powinien wspierać w nauce, tak aby uczeń czuł, że może coś osiągnąć, i w razie problemów wiedział, że może na niego liczyć. Istotnym elementem budującym pozytywny klimat jest także zaangażowanie rodziców w życie szkoły. Współpraca rodziców ze środowiskiem szkolnym może przyczynić się do zwiększenia osiągnięć uczniów.

Słowa kluczowe: klimat w szkole; nauczyciele; rodzina; szkoła

INTRODUCTION

School and family are one of the most important environments in which a young person grows up. How students feel in school can influence many areas of their life, among others, their wellbeing, self-satisfaction, academic performance (Gwiazdowska-Stańczak, 2021a, p. 101; Gwiazdowska-Stańczak, 2021b, p. 429). School climate consists of many different elements, including: relationship between the student and the teacher, attitude toward school, support in learning, imposed regulations and discipline, school and social environment, learning satisfaction, parental engagement, and opportunities (Zullig et al., 2015). Studies suggest that engagement in learning is most strongly correlated with a positive relationship between the student and the teacher (Gwiazdowska-Stańczak, 2021a, p. 95). Another crucial factor is parental engagement. Parents play a major role in the educational process of their children (Wołk, 2018, p.42). The collaboration of school and family is multifaceted and encompasses different areas of partaking in joint activities. The goal of these activities is to support the education process and to shape student engagement (O'Brien, 2025, p. 396). A young person grows up in immediate and distant environments, the most crucial of which are family and school (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 994). The objective of educational environments is to fulfill the needs of a young person. Through educational influence, they become familiar with values and norms, gain knowledge, competencies, and skills necessary to adapt to functioning in a given environment (Liberska & Suwalska-Barancewicz, 2020, p. 253). Education in a family is a natural process, whereas school has laid out objectives and educational goals specified in learning and education programs of a given facility. The most important role in the educational process in school is played by the class teacher. Their personal resources, like knowledge, personality, and social skills, greatly impact the development of a young person's personality. In a family, it is the parents who can create an optimal environment, fostering the child's development through their parental attitudes and relations with the child. In school, however, it is mainly the teachers who are responsible for the child's well-being and development. The relationship between the student and the teacher is one of the most crucial elements that shape the positive climate in school. How the student perceives their teacher can impact their engagement in the learning process. Interestingly, another important factor that positively influences students' learning motivation is the engagement of their parents in the school life (Gwiazdowska-Stańczak, 2021a, p. 109). This means that discussing collaboration between school and family is very important, not only for scientific purposes but also for practical ones.

THE IDEA OF SCHOOL CLIMATE

School climate is a multifaceted construct that helps to assess the quality of school life. It consists of norms, values, and goals (Gonzalvez et al., 2023, p. 1782). School climate is a subjective sense of how a given person feels in school; it is the quality and nature of school life (Gwiazdowska-Stańczak, 2021a, p. 39). School climate is based on relationships, especially student-teacher relationships, parental engagement, clear and understandable procedures, norms, values, and goals (Zullig et al., 2015, p. 1073). A positive climate and culture of school life are responsible for appropriate socialization of students, boost performance, and shield from risk factors. Moreover, shaping a positive climate in school aids prevention, increases motivation to study, and attendance (Ostaszewski, 2019, p. 17). School climate is defined as a multifaceted construct encompassing attitudes, views, and norms prevailing in a school (Harrison et al., 2025, p. 153).

An analysis of the current school climate and a diagnosis of the facility's problems can be conducted by a school psychologist by means of a questionnaire distributed to students, school employees, and parents. The next step would be to design corrective measures. A person who can conduct a diagnosis in school or class is, for instance, a school psychologist (Gwiazdowska-Stańczak & Lachowska, 2024, p. 115).

Chosen questions that students can be asked in the questionnaire (Gwiazdowska-Stańczak, 2021a, pp. 152–153):

- Do you get along well with your teachers?
- Are all students in your class treated equally?
- Do you think that the assessment principles are just?
- Does your teacher share the knowledge in an easy-to-grasp manner?
- Is your school well-equipped?
- Do you experience aggression from your peers?
- Do you get support from your classmates?
- Are you satisfied with the number of tests?
- Do your parents stay in touch with the teacher?
- Are your parents engaged in the life of your school, and in what way?
- What opportunities, in your opinion, does your school provide?

Exemplary questions that parents can be asked in the questionnaire (Gwiazdowska-Stańczak, 2021a, pp. 153–154):

- Is your child engaged in learning at home?
- Does your child look forward to coming to school?
- In what extracurricular activities does your child partake?
- What are your expectations of school?
- Does your child require support in learning?
- What is your child's attitude toward school? Does your child like school?
- Do you help your child in learning?

Are you satisfied with the school your child attends?

Does the teacher have time for you?

Do the teachers, in your opinion, treat the students appropriately?

Do you engage in school life?

Do you have any ideas what can additionally be done in the school?

The diagnosis of school climate should also extend to the parents of the students. Although they do not attend school daily, their viewpoint is also important. They can point out mistakes from their own perspective and point out areas where they can support the school environment. Diagnosis of school climate can help to promote better collaboration between the home environment and the school environment (Gwiazdowska-Stańczak, 2021a, p. 170).

COLLABORATION OF THE SCHOOL WITH PARENTS

The goal of school is not only learning but also upbringing. School, just like home, creates an educational environment (Katra, 2020, p. 336). The process of a child's socialization begins at home and is continued in school (Gokalp & Akbasli, 2021, p. 83). Often, a child spends half of their time in school (Wołk, 2018, p. 42). There are many forms of parent-teacher collaboration including: parent-teacher conferences, less formal meetings, e.g. different school ceremonies, organizing meeting with experts in the school, open lessons for parents, field trips or school outings with parents, courses for parents, introductory classes for parents of primary schoolers, consultations with teachers, electronic grade books, home visits, phone talks, e-mails, collecting opinions through mails (Bakiera, 2020, p. 302). Some forms of collaboration can be individual or collective and improve the functioning of a school. A given facility, its administration, and individual preferences of the teacher decide about choosing a preferred form of collaboration (Wołk, 2018, p. 43). Parents should be encouraged to engage in the process of educating their children, so as to make them aware that they, too, are responsible for the education of their child. Furthermore, parents should support teachers and take their remarks and advices into consideration. At the same time, parents should have the possibility to elaborate on subjects related to their children and be able to decide in some matters. The better the relations between parents and teachers, the better the academic performance of children (Gokalp & Akbasli, 2021, p. 84).

There are four different types of situations in the environment of a child. First: when the school does not fulfill its obligations and they have to be taken over by parents. Second: when a difficult family situation is being dragged over to school. Third: where both school and family are inefficient and the student is at the risk of affiliating him/herself with nonformal groups like gangs and cults. Fourth: An ideal situation where both school and family create a positive climate that facilitates students' achievements (Gwiazdowska, 2014, p. 226). It is worth mentioning that collaboration between school

and parents is required by law, thus, it not only should, but must take place. Parents have the right to be involved in the learning process of their children, and school must include actions related to collaboration with parents in its evaluation (Marzec & Borda, 2017, p. 98).

The most common problem in relations between teachers and parents arises when the teacher provides negative information about the child. This kind of situation generates stress for both parties. On one side, teachers expect parents' support in the process of education and motivation, on the other side, parents are not sure if they can meet these expectations (Katra, 2020, pp. 336–337). Lack of students' engagement in learning can result in the creation of a so-called vicious cycle – a student who is discouraged to learn and negatively perceives the school climate can, as a result, perform worse and lose faith in their abilities (Gwiazdowska-Stańczak, 2021a, p. 120). One of the problems that obstructs the process of shaping positive collaboration is divergent expectations of teachers and parents. Parents expect information about the achievements of their child; on the other hand, teachers rather expect an attitude that supports the educational process from parents (Buk-Cegiełka, 2019, p. 40). Especially when a student has worse performance or requires help in education, the parent will expect help to come from the teacher, meanwhile, the teacher will expect support from the parent. A positive relationship between the teacher and the parent can help the student improve their academic performance. A student who has good relations with their teacher will get education support and have the opportunity to generate academic achievements (Gwiazdowska-Stańczak, 2021a, p. 128). Positive relations between school and family create good conditions for supporting children – it teaches them responsibility, setting and achieving goals, and responsibility for their duties. Moreover, schools ought to promote different forms of collaboration and encourage parents to partake (Zymberaj, 2018, p. 259). Positive relationships in family shape the foundations of empathy toward school peers, and positive climate in home and class can lead to decreased risk of aggression in school (Jiménez & Estévez, 2017, p. 258).

There are barriers that can significantly hinder communication between parents and teachers. These can include cultural differences, language barriers, and socioeconomic differences. Polish schools have children from cultures such as the Roma, where teachers point to a number of problems with misunderstanding, lack of interest on the part of parents, and high student absenteeism (Szegda, 2024, p. 84). Bilingual students and foreigners in Polish schools receive support as students with special educational needs. Kusiak et al. (2024, p. 136) have proposed an interactive educational game for students aimed at teaching tolerance, integration, and respect for different cultures.

In summary, all activities aimed at supporting cooperation between parents and teachers should be treated as a priority in schools. Many problems can be avoided or, if they do arise, can be remedied much more quickly if there is open communication between the environments in which young people develop.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES – A CASE STUDY

Example 1

A problem with nicotine pouches appeared in school A. The school principal called a parent-teacher conference. At first, the information was sent individually to the parents of the children who were directly caught with having those pouches; next, the other parents were collectively informed about the danger. The school organized a meeting with a representative of MONAR (an organization that fights addiction, homelessness, and other social dangers) for students and separately for parents. Teachers underwent training. In the case of a problem in school, the facility works in a multifaceted way – with parents, teachers, and students. Especially when the problem concerns the health and safety of children, it cannot be resolved without the participation and support of parents. Parents need to be equipped with knowledge and awareness in a scenario when stimulants appear in school, a parent has to pay attention to whether their child is using forbidden substances at home, and after school.

Example 2

In school B, some students fell prey to online hate speech. Naturally, school takes actions like talking with a school psychologist, organizing group workshops about online hate conducted during homeroom hour, although help is not possible without the involvement of parents. It is the parents who control what their child is doing at home and what media they have access to. Conversation with parents and asking them to check the child's accounts, groups, what messages and to whom they write sparks resistance and rebellion. Parents renounce the idea that their child could be a culprit, excusing their children with freedom of speech, fooling around, and the right to privacy. In a situation like that school administration threatens with police. The conflict escalates further. Lack of good communication and trust can lead to the escalation of conflicts without actually trying to solve them. Most often, a parent will defend their child, and it will be difficult for them to believe the teacher or the school psychologists who talk about their child's mistakes. Prevention workshops and meetings with an expert are attended by only a fraction of parents, and most often by the ones whose children are not involved in a given case. Ultimately, one student is expelled from the facility, and the other's parents move them to another facility. The school can try to reach out to parents, but resistance and lack of time result in parents often not wanting to get involved in events, meetings, workshops etc., if they concern not only questions of education but also subjects connected to prevention.

Example 3

In school C, a diagnosis of school climate was conducted that showed that school employees, students, and parents are concerned with a badly maintained area surrounding the school and a dangerous entrance to the school's parking lot. Thanks to an anonymous questionnaire, which was conducted to collect information from the parents, and a parent-teacher conference it turned out that one of the parents owns a construction company, another one a gardening company, one is also an architect, and many other members of the school community are ready to spend some of their free time to improve the quality of the school's surroundings. Parents together with school employees and students gathered funds to improve the area's condition – together they designed a different road system by the school, separate entry and exit in a form of a roundabout, as to increase safety in the school's vicinity, a new walkway was painted, grass was planted, and every class chose their own plot where, as a part of science or biology lessons, they will care about plants together. Parents can provide great support to the school even in very fundamental issues.

Example 4

School D, to improve communication among parents, created a group on a social media portal and invited all the parents. Unfortunately, as it often happens in many schools, the group became a place of hate speech and contributed to intensification of conflicts. It occurs when, for instance, a conflict between students, which was resolved in school by teachers, is being relived again on the group. Parents should not get engaged in every conflict and students' matters. It often happens that students show more mature attitudes and are more likely to come to terms than their parents are. Those attitudes of parents create a resistance in teachers, who do not want to elaborate on situations in schools, because they fear an overreaction and critique. Not every parent can approach school situations with distance and trust in the educational methods of teachers. If a conflict between students was resolved and everybody experienced the consequences of bad behavior, there is no further need to relive the conflict again by the parents. On one hand, the parent should know what is happening at school; on the other hand, however, they cannot undermine the methods used by teachers.

When analyzing the actions taken and the attitudes of teachers and parents in schools in case 1 and case 2, it should be concluded that much more effective and faster help in solving all kinds of school problems will occur when teachers and parents work together. If parents lack trust in teachers, they will not be willing to take corrective action or listen to their advice. A model school is one where problems are solved through joint efforts, and school staff are treated with respect and can count on the support of their students' parents. Summarizing cases 3 and 4, it is worth noting how important a positive atmosphere at school is for a well-functioning institution.

How students, their parents, and teachers feel and how they talk to each other can have a significant impact on reducing problems.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, collaboration between school and family is a crucial factor that shapes a positive school climate. It concerns not only how students feel in class and how much they engage in learning; it also plays an important role in preventing dangers. A parent should be open to the problems of teachers; at the same time, the teacher should understand what situation the parent is in. Positive school climate means good relations between the school and family environment, and a collaboration focused on the child's well-being. If the local community is well-integrated and knows its problems and needs, it can do a lot of good.

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