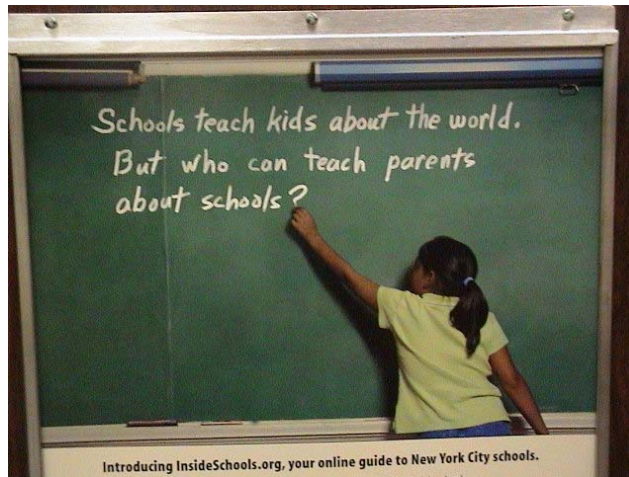


Meet the parents

The Strategic Relationship Management and the Play of Life as practical tools to develop an effective partnership between teachers and parents.



The goal of education may be simple but the processes to achieve those goals are complex. This task can not be done alone, at least in our society, it requires the skill of adults to appropriately and effectively network to make those goals possible.

Children spend most of their time with teachers, parents, or carers. The type of dynamic between them can make a great difference in the child's education for life.

What follows is a brief discussion of:

- the importance of this relationship and
- an introduction to a new effective communicational method to contribute in this topic called the Meet the Parents Pack

The pack gives educators and allied professionals tools to be able to include the parents in a positive way in the process of education.

The Meet the Parents Pack uses the Play of Life communication power to address this behaviour. The method is highly efficient, minimizing the aloneness and powerlessness teachers and parents feel in the task of helping their children to become successful adults.¹

Meeting Darren's mother

This case study is a continuation of the case study described in the Anti-bullying Pack. Darren has been bullying Simon in the playground. This is a repetitive behaviour found in Darren. It's not a physical bullying but an insidious and demeaning style he uses at school to put Simon down. Mrs Laurie, his teacher, is apprehensive about talking to Darren's parents as they are very active members of the Parents and Citizens group in the school and feel they have some ownership in how the school is run.

Mrs Laurie calls Darren's mother, Mrs K, for a meeting. She arrives on time, well dressed and looking at her watch, indicating her disapproval at Mrs Laurie arriving late. (Mrs Laurie has been helping a student who had difficulty with his homework).

¹ The Meet the Parents Pack comes in two levels, I and II. Pack I provides practical and effective communication tools to relate and effectively include parents in the education of their children. Meet the Parents Pack II provides special techniques for teachers to help parents to deal with some behavioural issues with their children.

The meeting

- Mrs K Ok, now tell me what else my son's done that the school cannot handle.
- Mrs L (Mrs L is shocked by her comment, she just finished teaching, she's tired and doesn't need this. She doesn't directly respond to Mrs K comment). As you know we had another incident suggesting Darren is feeling tense and anxious. In these situations he responds aggressively to other children, and me. We understand he may be feeling tense for other reasons and we want to help him. Our aim is to provide the best context for Darren to develop as well as to care for every other child too. I would like. (She's stopped by Mrs K)
- Mrs K Listen, Darren is ok. He's a great child and he behaves like a child. I can't spend my life in the school dealing with these issues. I believe it's the school, and don't take it personally, it's the school that needs to learn the skills to handle bright children. He gets bored as he's so much ahead of everyone else. I'm glad my husband didn't come, he's so busy he would hate to waste his time on this." She continues talking and Mrs L just listens.

The communication went nowhere. Mrs L tried to talk a bit more but she was overwhelmed by Mrs K's bullying. She hates herself for calling Mrs K as she knew what the result would be. The next day she swallows her fear and goes to see the principal. She explains the issue and mentions that the communication with the mother was not easy. Without her finishing the sentence the Principal responds:

"Yes I know she can be very difficult. Look Mrs Laurie, Darren's parents commented positively about the meeting Darren had with his remedial teacher. What about if I ask the remedial teacher to meet with them?"

"Good idea", says Mrs Laurie, "anything but me talking to them".

Mrs K's reaction to Mrs L was similar to Darren's, she responded from her reptilian brain. She didn't even allow Mrs L to finish, didn't enquire about the situation (cortical function) and didn't pause to form a picture, to feel what the situation was with her son and others (limbic brain).

Mrs L has an issue to resolve; she had identified the problem and had some ideas about how to fix it (cortical brain). She was unwise to invite so high powered a person straight after a busy day at school. She could have asked her to come a bit later and to meet her in a different room, other than the classroom. This would give Mrs L time to warm-up to Mrs K and perhaps connect with her differently (limbic system)

Mrs K and Mrs L were trying to connect, unsuccessfully, from different parts of the brain.

Meeting with Mrs G

Mrs G, the remedial teacher, invited Mrs K for a meeting. The phone conversation was tense with Mrs K commenting that she can't be expected to "live" in the school.

- Mrs G Hello Mrs K, thank you for coming. I believe that you could help us to help Darren better.
- Mrs K "I believe so. I see the school cannot cope with him, it's always the same with bright kids!
- Mrs G (Placing the Play of Life kit on the table in front of Mrs K) "I use these figures to help me have a better picture of the situation. Could you please use these figures to show me how you think Darren feels in the school?"
- Mrs K "This is different", she thinks, and starts to create the picture.

Mrs G "Could you tell me who is who?"



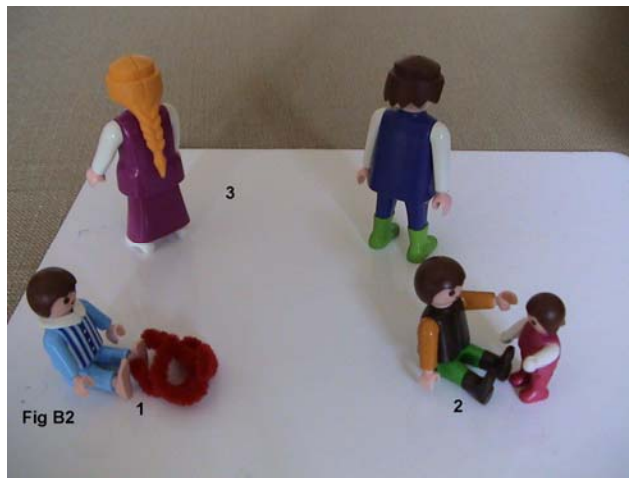
Mrs K "Yes, it's very obvious. This is Darren (fig B1 – 1), these are his friends, he's very popular (fig B1-2) and these are other children he doesn't like to be with (fig B1-3). We teach him to be selective with his friends, that's what is important in life: who you know.

Mrs G Mrs K if you put yourself into Darren's shoes and you imagine being in this situation, how do you feel?

Mrs K "I would feel great!

Mrs G "Thank you, you've done it very well, you're very creative. Could you please depict now how you see him at home?"

please depict now how you see him at home?



Mrs K (After she creates the picture) It looks different doesn't it? At home he's more a loner (fig B2-1), he chooses to play by himself and leave the two brothers (fig B2-2) aside. His little brother Bob is very cute but very demanding of attention, you know, the baby of the family. Jason has been very responsible since he was little and gets on very well with Bob. And my husband and I (fig B2-3) are, during until 7 or 8 working. We're very grateful with them as they so understand.

Mrs G "Mrs K if you put yourself into Darren's shoes again and you imagine

being in this situation, how do you feel?"

Mrs K "I would feel a bit alone.

Mrs G (Rotating the board allowing Mrs K to look at the picture from different angles) Anything else?

Mrs K "Left out, I think. But (leaving the role as Darren) this is what he wants to do, he's very independent, we love all of them the same, but you know how children are, they always look for extra attention, attention we cannot give them at the moment

Mrs G "I really understand, life puts a lot of pressure on us, doesn't it?"

Mrs K "Yes, it does!

Mrs G "Coming back to Darren, Could you identify any other feelings?"

Mrs K "I believe anger. But isn't it normal when you have other brothers?"

Mrs G "How does he express his anger at home?"

Mrs K "At home he's very quiet and we have high standards of behaviour, if he doesn't behave he knows what will happen.

Mrs G "What happens?"

Mrs K "He has to go to his room until he calms down and can behave! Isn't it right!"

Mrs G "I believe that it's very difficult to educate our children; there are so many influences that could affect our children's behaviour. Looking at the picture where Darren feels angry, do you believe that something could be done to help him.

Mrs K "Well!... I think so. I may need to give him some attention.

(Mrs K without any direction from Mrs G takes the figure that represents her and move it towards Darren)

Mrs G "Would you be willing to look at that and have another chat in a week or so to see how things are progressing?



(Mrs G chooses not to work on this movement at this time, this is a specific technique of the Play of Life by which the player is left with a "movement" in mind.)

Mrs K "Yes, I think...it would be good!

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