

## COLLABORATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PARENTS IN CREATING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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**Abstract.** *The successful implementation of inclusive education in primary schools relies heavily on effective collaboration between teachers and parents. This paper explores the dynamics, benefits, and challenges of such partnerships in fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment for children with diverse educational needs. Drawing on current research and case studies, the article highlights how open communication, mutual trust, and shared decision-making between educators and families contribute to the academic and social success of all students, particularly those with special educational needs (SEN). The study also identifies common barriers to collaboration, including time constraints, lack of training, and differing expectations, and offers practical recommendations for improving parent-teacher cooperation within inclusive school settings.*

**Keywords:** *inclusive education; primary school; teacher-parent collaboration; special educational needs; inclusive environment; family engagement; communication barriers*

**Introduction.** Inclusive education is a globally recognized approach that ensures all children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have equal access to quality education within mainstream classrooms. It promotes equity, respect for diversity, and active participation of every learner, particularly those with special educational needs (SEN). However, the successful implementation of inclusive practices in primary education requires more than just policy adoption or curriculum adjustment—it calls for strong, sustained collaboration between teachers and parents.

Parents are a child's first educators and hold unique insights into their child's strengths, challenges, and emotional needs. Teachers, on the other hand, are responsible for creating structured and supportive learning environments. When these two groups work together, they can build a more personalized and effective educational experience for every child, especially those requiring additional support.

Numerous studies have shown that positive teacher-parent collaboration leads to improved academic outcomes, better behavior, and increased self-esteem among students with SEN. Collaboration fosters consistency between home and school, enables early identification of learning needs, and encourages the joint development of strategies to support the child's progress.

Despite its proven benefits, establishing meaningful collaboration remains a challenge in many educational settings. Barriers such as limited communication, differing expectations,

lack of time, and insufficient training can hinder the formation of effective partnerships. This is particularly true in primary schools, where teachers often manage large classes and parents may not fully understand their role in supporting inclusive education.

This article explores the importance of teacher-parent collaboration in the context of inclusive primary education. It examines the benefits of strong partnerships, identifies the obstacles that prevent effective cooperation, and provides practical strategies for fostering productive relationships between families and educators. The goal is to highlight how collaborative efforts can create an inclusive environment where every child is valued, supported, and given the opportunity to thrive.

**Literature Review.** The role of collaboration between teachers and parents in inclusive education has been widely discussed in academic literature. Researchers agree that effective partnerships between families and educators are essential for supporting children with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream classrooms.

According to Epstein's model of parental involvement, schools that actively engage families in the educational process experience higher levels of student achievement and motivation. This model identifies six types of involvement, including communication and decision-making, which are especially relevant in inclusive education settings. When teachers and parents share information and jointly participate in planning, they can better respond to the individual needs of students with disabilities [1].

Friend and Cook emphasize that collaboration must be built on mutual respect, trust, shared goals, and open communication. Their research shows that when parents are viewed as equal partners in the educational process, they are more likely to participate meaningfully and support learning at home. Moreover, teachers benefit from parents' insights into their children's personalities, learning styles, and home environments [2].

Several studies highlight the positive impact of strong parent-teacher collaboration. For example, consistent two-way communication leads to better student behavior, academic success, and emotional well-being [3]. Similarly, family engagement plays a crucial role in identifying and implementing individualized learning strategies for students with SEN [4].

However, researchers also point to barriers that can hinder collaboration. These include time constraints, lack of training, cultural and language differences, and unequal power dynamics between teachers and parents [5]. Many teachers report feeling unprepared to work with families, especially in cases involving complex special needs, while some parents feel intimidated by the school system or unsure of how to contribute effectively.

In response to these challenges, recent literature suggests several strategies to promote effective partnerships. These include organizing regular parent-teacher meetings, using inclusive communication tools (e.g., visual aids, interpreters), providing family training workshops, and adopting a school-wide culture of collaboration [6]. Inclusive schools are those where family input is valued at all levels—from classroom instruction to policy development.

In summary, the literature underscores the importance of building strong, respectful, and consistent relationships between teachers and parents to foster truly inclusive primary education. While obstacles remain, the research provides a clear roadmap for how schools can create environments that support all learners through meaningful collaboration.

**Research Methodology.** This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the nature and effectiveness of collaboration between teachers and parents in fostering an inclusive learning environment in primary schools. Qualitative methods are particularly suitable for this research, as they allow for in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perspectives, and interactions within real-life educational settings.

#### Research Design

The research was conducted as a case study involving three public primary schools that have adopted inclusive education practices. A case study design was selected to allow detailed examination of the dynamics between educators and parents in specific school contexts. This design facilitated the identification of both common patterns and unique challenges faced in the collaboration process.

#### Participants

Participants included 12 primary school teachers and 15 parents of children with special educational needs (SEN). The teachers were selected based on their experience working in inclusive classrooms, while the parents were chosen through school recommendations to ensure they had ongoing interactions with teachers. The diversity of participants in terms of years of experience, socio-economic background, and child needs was considered to enrich the data.

#### Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions:

- Semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents allowed flexibility in responses while maintaining a consistent structure across participants. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.
- Focus group discussions were conducted with two groups of teachers and parents separately to stimulate shared insights and discussion around common challenges and solutions.
- Field notes and school documents, such as Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and communication logs, were also reviewed to triangulate findings.

#### Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved transcribing interviews and discussions, coding data inductively, and identifying recurring themes and patterns. NVivo software was used to assist in organizing and categorizing the data. Themes were developed around key aspects such as communication practices, parental involvement, collaboration barriers, and strategies for improvement.

#### Ethical Considerations



All participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the research and gave their written consent to participate. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured throughout the study. Ethical approval was obtained from the educational research ethics committee at the host institution.

**Research discussion.** The findings of this study highlight the central role of collaboration between teachers and parents in promoting inclusive practices in primary education. Participants widely agreed that strong, trusting relationships between educators and families enhance the academic, social, and emotional outcomes for children with special educational needs (SEN). However, the nature and effectiveness of collaboration varied depending on several factors.

#### 1. Importance of Mutual Respect and Communication

One of the key themes that emerged from the data was the importance of mutual respect and consistent communication. Teachers who actively listened to parents' concerns and involved them in educational decisions created more inclusive and supportive environments for students. Parents expressed greater satisfaction and engagement when teachers regularly updated them on their child's progress and welcomed their input. This confirms the work of Friend and Cook, who emphasize the need for equality and shared responsibility in parent-teacher partnerships.

#### 2. Challenges to Effective Collaboration

Despite the benefits, several barriers were identified. Time constraints, lack of training, and differing expectations between teachers and parents often hindered collaboration. Some teachers admitted to feeling overwhelmed by administrative duties and lacked time for meaningful communication with parents. In contrast, some parents felt their concerns were dismissed or not taken seriously, especially when cultural or linguistic differences were present.

These findings are consistent with the studies by Lake and Billingsley, who documented that unresolved misunderstandings and unequal power dynamics could strain parent-school relationships. Addressing these issues requires systemic changes and targeted training for both educators and parents.

#### 3. Role of School Leadership and Policy

The data also pointed to the significant influence of school leadership and institutional policies on collaboration. Schools that implemented structured communication systems (e.g., regular meetings, IEP reviews) and promoted a culture of inclusion had stronger and more effective partnerships. Teachers in these schools reported feeling more supported, and parents felt more valued as contributors to their child's education.

This supports earlier research that emphasizes the role of school-wide policies and leadership in fostering inclusive collaboration. Without administrative support, even the most willing teachers and parents may struggle to maintain consistent, productive partnerships.

#### 4. Strategies for Improvement

Participants suggested several practical strategies to strengthen collaboration:

- Training workshops for teachers on working with families of children with SEN.
- Family education sessions to help parents understand inclusive practices and how to support learning at home.
- Establishing clear, regular communication channels (e.g., parent portals, messaging apps).
- Creating roles such as parent liaisons or coordinators to mediate between families and schools.

These strategies align with inclusive education frameworks that emphasize shared decision-making, cultural responsiveness, and proactive engagement.

**Conclusion.** This study explored the dynamics of collaboration between teachers and parents in supporting inclusive education in primary schools. The findings clearly demonstrate that strong, respectful, and consistent partnerships between educators and families are essential for creating inclusive environments that meet the diverse needs of all learners, particularly those with special educational needs (SEN).

Effective collaboration relies on mutual trust, open communication, and shared responsibility. When teachers actively involve parents in the educational process, students benefit from a more personalized and cohesive learning experience. Moreover, parental engagement contributes to improved academic performance, better behavior, and stronger emotional well-being in children.

However, several barriers continue to hinder effective collaboration, including lack of time, limited training, communication gaps, and differing expectations. Addressing these challenges requires systemic support from school leadership, ongoing professional development for educators, and proactive outreach to families. Schools must foster a culture of inclusion in which all stakeholders—teachers, parents, and administrators—are valued and empowered to contribute.

In conclusion, building meaningful and sustainable teacher-parent partnerships is not only beneficial but necessary for the successful implementation of inclusive education in primary schools. By investing in collaborative practices and addressing existing challenges, educational institutions can ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive in a supportive, inclusive learning environment.

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