

Good Practice from IES Selgas (Cudillero, Asturias, Spain)

**Work plan with the families of students in the first academic year in
Secondary School (1° ESO¹)**

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INTRODUCTION

IES Selgas is a small state Secondary school located in a rural and fishing area that in the last years has been suffering the effects of an important economic recession. However, the sector services is lately experiencing a certain rise through tourism and restaurants and hotel business. It is located in an area with bad communications and a shortage of cultural resources. In fact, up to the time where the IES was opened ten years ago, there was no Secondary School in the area. This is closely linked to the low level of education of the population (only 2.7% has average or superior university studies).

Most of the teaching staff of the school has really been involved in this practice in one way or another: the school counsellor, tutors of 1st ESO, the teachers' team of 1st of ESO, the Coordinator of First Cycle and the School Management team.

Although at first the project was aimed exclusively at the students at risk of social exclusion and of not being able to get the minimum qualifications, after seeing the existing difficulties to work with this group, it seemed more appropriate to carry out a specific plan in order to promote the involvement of the families in the school life, facilitating and promoting this way the relationship family-school. Consequently, at the end, the target group was made up of 1° ESO students and their families as a whole.

DESCRIPTION.

The Work plan includes a series of actions aimed at the 1° ESO students and their families. Compulsory actions carried out every year are not mentioned. These are the following:

¹ 1° ESO: first year in Spanish Compulsory Secondary Education, 12 years old students.

a) Activities with families.

1. *Talk* given by the school counsellor and the director of studies aimed at the families of 6° Primaria² students coming from the assigned schools. The intention of the talk is to eliminate the possible doubts and to reduce the parents' anxiety and worries before the change of stage and school. The talk is organized in each of the schools in June and is structured in two parts:

- General information about Secondary Education and the management of the Secondary school.
- Some advice about promoting responsibility habits in children (such as participation of parents in their children's school life).

2. *Welcoming day.*

The first day of the school year 1° ESO students' parents are invited to go to the school and have a meeting with the school management team, the tutors and the School Counsellor. In this meeting, they are given detailed information about the stage of Compulsory Secondary Education and the running of the school. Later, the School Counsellor explains the characteristics of the new school year as well as the changes that the family should make around the student so that he gets a high level of achievement. Finally, parents are provided with a document with all this information in writing and they have a guided walk around the school.

3. *Individual interview with all the families of 1° ESO.*

During the first term, the school Counsellor and the Director of Studies have an individual interview with all the families of 1° ESO students. The date and hour of the interview is arranged with the parents according to their availability. It is an informal interview, without any previous questionnaire, although it provides a lot of information on the characteristics of the family environment, the student's study habits, and the parents' expectations about their children's future studies. After the interview, a short summary is made with all the information which will be used later to write a report on the familiar profile of the group. One of the main objectives of this interview is to create an atmosphere of confidence between the school and the families, what increases their involvement and participation in the academic monitoring of the students.

² 6° Primaria: last course in Primary Education, 11 year old students.

4. *Meeting with the School Counsellor* to assess the running of the group during the first term.

Once the results of the first term are known (at the end of November), parents are expected to think about the organization and planning of their children's studies through a questionnaire that the class tutor has previously worked with the students. In this meeting, the school Counsellor explains parents how to organize the right timetable for effective study and what their role is in the monitoring of their children's study.

5. *Interview with the families of the students who have failed five or more subjects.*

The tutor gets an appointment with the families of the students with bad results (five or more failed subjects). When families cannot come to school, a telephone conversation is arranged, although it is better to have the personal interview. During this interview, the reasons that led to that situation are analyzed (in case they were not expected) and some measures are adopted in order to improve the school achievement.

6. *Training Course for parents and teachers on "Communication skills with the children".*

This course, aimed at parents and teaching staff, was given by the Dra. Raquel Amaya from the University of Oviedo (Faculty of Education). At first, it was a training course for the families taking part in the project. However, as it could have been expected, these families could not come or did not show any interest in attending the course, and that is the reason why it was offered to the 1º ESO students' families as a whole and to the teaching staff in general.

This was one of the most interesting activities for the school among those carried out as collaborators of the CPR de Avilés (In-Service Teacher Training and Resource Centre) in a Comenius 2.1. Project ([Drop-Outs, Open door](#)): the fact of getting parents and teachers working together for the first time was highly appreciated by all participants.

7. *Forum Book Club.*

Parents and some teachers (among them the school counsellor and members of the School Management team) meet every Thursday for two hours more or less and they

share their worries and expectations concerning their children after having read some parts or chapters of a book. Last term the book chosen was: "How to talk so that your children listen to you and how to listen so that your children talk to you". The atmosphere of these meetings is very friendly and relaxing and some mothers have already started to put into practice this new way of understanding communication with teenagers.

EVALUATION

We can draw some conclusions from the implementation of all these measures:

- There is a higher involvement of families in school life. 100% of the families have attended the school for the individual interview with the School Counsellor and the Director of Studies. Practically 100% of the families have been interviewed at least once by the tutor along the course. Between 50 and 60% of the families have attended the three-term meetings with the School Counsellor.
- Teachers have become more aware of the importance of having fluent communication school-family. The School Counsellor has offered guidelines to do the interviews. On the other hand, the tutors have favoured the contacts with the families more reluctant to go to the school.
- The interviews tutor-family have become more effective: the system of collection of data by the tutor from the teachers team of a group of a students for a scheduled parents visit has been improved in order to make it more operative and have more time to find solutions to the existing problems.
- There has been an improvement on the academic achievements of some students. The tutors have stated that some of the students at risk of school failure have achieved better results once their families have started to monitor them adequately.



Socrates

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