

## Good Practice from CP “Reconquista” (Cangas de Onís, Asturias, Spain)

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### INTRODUCTION

Reconquista Public School is a primary school located in Cangas de Onís (Asturias) to which a total of 495 students attend. These pupils come both from Cangas de Onís itself and the surrounding villages of Amieva, Parres and Ponga. It is necessary to keep in mind that this fact has an influence on different aspects of the school dynamics. We have also take into account that, in the case of the students travelling from the furthest villages, their socioeconomic and cultural characteristics differ in some aspects from those of Cangas and the nearest towns, which are becoming little by little a place of residence for families that prefer a rural environment. In the case of the farthest villages the father is normally the one with a driving licence and they have only one car at home, whereas in the case of the nearest villages, both parents can usually drive. All these aspects condition greatly their participation in school life.

### DESCRIPTION

The teaching staff tries to overcome these differences and mechanisms are provided to allow that all the families can participate as actively as possible in the school dynamics. For instance, they organise activities that allow those families with more difficulties to have an active presence in the school.

The first aspect that we should reflect is the **increase in the number of members of the Reconquista Public School AMPA** (Parents Association) in the last years, passing from having around 13 families three years ago to having more than forty at the present moment. This change is due to the impulse of the Parents Association’s new management committee and to the willingness of the school to help as much as possible to increase this number, because they think that the Association will work better as long as it has a representative amount of members.

Some actions that have been (and are) carried out in the school to encourage the involvement of the AMPA are the following: its greater presence in the organization of extracurricular activities, its active participation in aspects of coexistence, monthly meetings with its management committee, AMPA membership application forms included in the documentation given to the families, place in the agenda of the school and room available for meetings.

Besides, the AMPA has had an important role inside the organization and working of the “**School of Parents**” that was created in Reconquista Primary School last year and that is still running at present. This School, opened to every family at a time chosen by those involved, intends to be a forum of dialogue and participation within the school. It is believed that families, sharing the common bond that their children’s life at school means, must have a space, a place where they can deal with important aspects, doubts, curiosities they consider beneficial for their lives outside the school.

The topics chosen greatly favoured reflection and the dynamism of the meetings and the aims were achieved, so they succeeded this way in maintaining both the number of participants as well as the demand for the continuity of the activity in the coming school years.

At the school it is assumed that the community as a whole has to take an active part in key aspects of their children’s education and that there has to be an effective collaboration among all parts involved in order to strengthen aspects dealt with at school and vice versa.

One of the activities that are taking place this year is an example of this idea.

In the last years, it has been noticed that “good manners”, something so usual not long ago, are being lost. In the terms of coexistence in society, saying "please" or "thank you" or greeting someone on arrival are ways of behaviour that should not be lost as they are very important in social relationships. Therefore, the school establishes four or five behavioural aspects, agreed on by the Pedagogical Coordination Commission and known by all teachers, to work with in the different cycles. Then, posters are designed in order to show students what they should do in a particular place or moment so that this behaviour normally extends outside the school.

This activity that is taking place in the school has two targets: on the one hand, families, who are sent a notice explaining what is being done, and on the other hand, the premises which students normally attend. For this, a previous meeting is held with the business owners in order to let them know the project and ask for their cooperation. Once they agree, they are given a poster with those aspects dealt with at the school with the intention that they also continue outside. In this way the whole community is working together towards the same goal and therefore they are more likely to succeed.

Emphasis should also be put on the **School Self-assessment Project** as an element of participation of the whole community. Reconquista Public School has been working with this project for three years now and in it the role of families is very important.

Along these three school years different surveys and questionnaires have been made asking for the opinion of the families about different aspects of the general running of the school. This has enabled parents to write, anonymously, their suggestions and contributions to the school dynamics. At present, most of the families' suggestions have been taken into account. It is important to bear in mind that their opinions must have a reflection on any type of action. Otherwise the school could not work in the same way.

These three actions have been the most relevant in recent courses. However, apart from these, there are some other aspects that nearly every school takes into account: meetings with families at an appropriate time in order to favour their presence, activities together with families... All this has the only purpose of avoiding having a school isolated and faraway from a community that has to be and must be present.



## Socrates

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