

For a Better School Climate: Best Practices for Improved Parent-Teacher-Student Relations

This paper begins with a case-study of one of the first independent schools in post-communist Poland. It looks at what worked and how the Polish Ministry of Education used such schools as pioneers, resulting in a trickle-up effect on the larger system. One strategy to achieve better relations within a school, is to define the roles of and empower each member of a school community (parents, teachers, students, school administration and local community). As soon as these members are seen and see themselves as active stakeholders and responsible players, rather than pawns, the dynamic changes to cooperation.

The author proposes using registered PTAs (Parent Teacher Association) at each school as a tool for formalizing roles and responsibilities. Teachers are trained not just in creative educational programs, but as partners with parents and students in determining and implementing activities which enhance the learning experience and prepare students for life in a democratic society. Students are far less likely to rebel and resort to violence if they have real, important work to do, have channels for expressing their opinions and the belief that they are listened to, and have decision-making power and responsibility. The key, it seems, is to create a productive, respected partnership amongst the stakeholders.

Many extra-curricular educational programs are described along with best practices in the context of the School Plus Network of public (state or community) schools throughout Central Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the former Soviet Union.

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