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## ***Teachers’ Perceptions of Parental Involvement in Primary Education***

### **Extended summary**

Parental involvement in primary education represents an active, ongoing participation of parents in the education of their children. According to expert opinion, parents can manifest this involvement at home by reading books with their children, helping them with homework, and discussing school events, or at school, by attending school meetings or volunteering in the classroom. Teachers are sometimes frustrated by the parents’ apparent inability to dedicate their attention fully to the matters important for their children. This paper aims to determine teachers’ perceptions of both the benefits of creating productive partnerships with parents, as well as the obstacles that must be overcome. The paper is based on the research which focused on the school communication with families of students. The research methodology involved the preparation and design of a standard questionnaire adapted to examine teachers’ perceptions of parental involvement in the education of four different categories of students: general education students, students with disabilities, students from low-income families, and students with unique gifts and talents. Different elements of the main topic were analysed as well: communication with families regarding student achievement, communicating with families at teacher-parent meetings, and addressing difficult topics with families. The representative sample consisted of 20 teachers from primary schools in Bitola region. Out of the total number of the respondents, 15 teachers work in primary schools in urban areas, three teachers work in primary schools in rural areas, and two teachers work in the institution for special education. The data were collected from April 15th, 2017 until May 10th, 2017. The respondents’ task was to evaluate the frequency of parental involvement in school life by checking one of the offered answers: “sometimes”, “often” and “very often”. The research results showed that

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attending informative meetings is the main form of parental involvement in schools. However, their participation in the school decision-making is at a very low level. Regarding parental assistance in meeting the needs of their children at school the results showed, not surprisingly, that parents who have children with disabilities participate more than the parents of gifted and talented children. Background factors were also taken into account (e.g. socio-economic status of families). According to the research results, there is no statistically significant difference between the categories “general education students” and “students from low-income families”. In teachers’ opinion, parents with high aspirations are more involved in their children’s education, whereas high parental and pupil aspirations may lessen the effects of the low socio-economic background. The last section of the paper offers recommendations and advice on how to help schools and teachers to foster successful parental involvement because it improves not only student behavior and attendance, but also positively affects student achievement. According to the research findings, successful home-school collaboration between schools and pupils’ families may include: planning the ways in which schools can communicate with families and involve them in a variety of ways, making parents equal partners with educators by allowing them a voice in school decisions, encouraging parents with gifted children to be more active in the school life, involving disadvantaged parents (with social or economic limitations) in educational teams, and strengthening parent-teacher relationships through home visits.

**Keywords:** teachers, parents, partnership, children’s needs, education.

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