

# PARENTAL TRAINING ON VIRTUAL EDUCATION IN LEBANON

Information sheet

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## CONTEXT

Distance learning alters the learning framework for children and also reexamines the role of parents and families alike. Since the contact between teachers and children is not as regular (not as direct), parents have a renewed role as with them. Being in close proximity to the children, they are in a position to simultaneously relay their education, whilst being technical “facilitators” in making remote learning frameworks and tools available to them. With the possibility to raise learning concerns and get instructions and homework, they are a vital link between children and teachers...

*In 2020, the **SESOBEL** (Lebanon) organisation offering adapted teaching, follow-ups and care for children with disabilities (autism, mobility impairment, mental disability, ...), provided activities for children remotely owing to the COVID-19 crisis travel restrictions. They gave parents a vital role, by effectively becoming relays for specialised teachers in implementing the learning objectives outlined for each child in their individually adapted action plan.*



## Mobilized resources

- 01 1 specialist teacher per group of 5-6 children and 2 teachers for the online sessions (10 to 45 minute sessions, 3 to 4 sessions per child per day);
- 02 Time spent building the team's strengths in video filming and editing to make video tutorials and put exercises on Nearpod...
- 03 Time also spent on planning and follow-ups with parents;
- 04 One teaching specialist per unit who proofread, modified and approved 1500 activity sheets throughout the year.

## What is important in enabling parents to effectively become relays for teachers in the children's learning

It is vital to enable parents to participate in activities, to play a role in their children's projects and be facilitators in online learning sessions where necessary (in the case of children with disabilities who have specific needs). To do so:

- 01 Plan and give parents an overview;
- 02 Prepare and support parents in playing their role, adopt a good attitude;
- 03 Give parents an active role in the sessions if present and highlight this role;
- 04 Keep parents informed on a regular basis, (re)engage and (re)motivate them.

## Steps

### Plan and give parents an overview

To play an active role and really get involved in the education, parents first need to understand its overall logic: What is going to happen? What are the objectives? What will be expected from them? Therefore the teacher's primary role is to have a teaching approach with parents. And to consider them as partners.

It can be useful to first include them in the programme's design to get their feedback and ideas on the suggested tools, timetables and objectives for the children. This can either be done individually or collectively (or both). Their knowledge about their child is thereby appreciated and the educational response is more appropriate. Next, it is important they know where they're going. This guide will thereby advise them in their new role.

Since 2017, **SESOBEL** has made a habit of consulting parents on the priority objectives for their children. This helps develop individually adapted action plans. A form was sent to parents at the beginning of the year for them to set the children's progress objectives themselves. **SESOBEL** went further with this cooperation remotely: parents directly participated in an interdisciplinary team reflection with **SESOBEL** to put this programme in place:

- 01 The individually adapted action plan for each child was developed with parents. They gave their opinion and thereby began to identify where they should actively participate (overview);
- 02 Next, a monthly programme was sent to parents on WhatsApp every month. This enabled them to have the online session schedule for the month ahead, the activity sheets and necessary tutorials, etc.



1 - Parents met with the **SESOBEL** team in person to develop the children's individually adapted plan for the year.  
2 - A more detailed programme with practical details of the activities schedule is sent via Whatsapp once per month.

## Prepare and Support Parents

When asking parents to take on a new role, they must be given the necessary tools to do so. The following elements should be considered:

- Technical (connecting to a zoom meeting, finding the correct radio channel...);
- Logistical (getting the space ready, settling the children, having the materials available...);
- Educational (participating in activities, understanding instructions...);
- Attitude (how to behave with the children).

This support can take place individually or collectively before and between sessions using the various available resources: live discussions via videoconferences or recorded videos, written documents, phone calls, online meetings with teachers or relays through the parent-student council...It is often best to use several resources.

**SESOBEL** implemented a two-stage system:

Strengthening the plan and tools:

- *The use of tools: parents had access to tutorial videos to find out how to use Zoom (videoconferencing) and Nearpod (interactive exercises);*
- *Settling the children: sit them down, at the correct height, in a calm environment before the session begins.*

Strengthening the activities themselves:

- Teachers created activity sheets to show parents each activity ( shared at the beginning of the month). They often took photos of themselves whilst doing these activities;*
- They also created video tutorials for parents, showing the activity to carried out step by step, often getting involved themselves with the helps of their own children;*
- PowerPoints (visual supports) were also provided to show how to help the children before, during after the sessions and especially how to adopt a good attitude:*
  - Don't do it on behalf of the child*
  - Concentrate exclusively on the activity (do not cook at the same time...)*
  - Have a calm environment without everyone surrounding the child*
  - Intervene at the right time and don't answer for the child*
  - Allow them to make mistakes/don't have an assessment mindset*



An example of a video tutorial made by a SESOBEL teacher and her daughter: preparing plasticine.

## Give parents an active role in the sessions if present and highlight their role

It is important that the role of parents is not limited to that of a “channel” during these sessions and it is sometimes active and appreciated instead. This helps to involve the parent in their role and strengthens their relationship with the child (and the educators). One must also keep in mind that the parent is the person directly with the child, and therefore cannot have a solely passive role. If the parents are there, they are an integral part of the session.

*The SESOBEL educators have learned to include parents in sessions when they are with the children - not just as aides, but sometimes as co-facilitators:*

**01** *Sometimes, the educators have suggested that the parents themselves choose the exercise of the day from the manual from a selection, and lead the session for the other children in the group;*

**02** *SESOBEL also proposed to parents that they send videos of exercises done with the children to share through a Facebook group or during Zoom sessions. This contributes to the parents' pride, and gives the other parents and children something to emulate.*

*In some cases, the parents were present more as observers than participants, but this was made clear to them so that they were not frustrated.*

## Keep parents informed on a regular basis, (re)engage and (re)motivate them

At a high level, one of the keys to the relationship with the parents (and the children) is regular communication.

At home with their children, the parents may quickly feel “alone”, overwhelmed by the situation, particularly since they often have other professional and personal problems to face.

To stay engaged, it is important that they feel supported, that they have other people with them, and that any problem will be detected as quickly as possible. Communication may be done both individually (calls, texts, meetings if possible...), collectively (having regular meet-ups for parents, having a WhatsApp group), or even between parents as a way of learning from peers (setting up a support group...).

Engagement also includes remembering the importance of the parents' role, valuing what they do and the progress they have made.

*SESOBEL has ensured psychological monitoring for all of the families in situations of health and social crisis. But on a more continuous basis, the educators have developed sufficiently close relationships and bonds with the parents to keep their engagement and support throughout the year.*

*The educators have also personally invested a great deal in the parents, which requires a great deal of energy; at the same time, the parents recognise their work more and have more trust in them, which is rewarding.*

### To maintain the parents' engagement, the unit leaders and educators have facilitated communication:

- The unit chiefs met with parents via Zoom videoconference with all three to recall the importance of on-line learning, the rights of children to have the same access to education as other children;
- The educators have also personally called parents with whom there have been difficulties - for example, parents of children who have missed sessions or who have brought up personal problems during sessions; in some cases, they have arranged for support at home to attain a particular goal for the child;
- Regulation spaces (groups) have also been created because the parents sometimes used the live sessions to talk about their problems and those of the child (in the child's presence!).

### To keep the parents' interest, the educators must:

- Vary the activities, so that the children and their parents do not get bored, certain activities are more to entertain the parents than the children;
- Dedicate some activities to giving the lead role to the parents, for example, setting up games and competitions (general knowledge questions and contests to see who can fold laundry the fastest on Mother's Day...).

### To re-motivate parents when a situation becomes difficult, SESOBEL has insisted on:

- The needs of the child, shared at the beginning of the year;
- The goals already attained by their child (improvements);
- The risk that the child would lose skills, regress...(which the parents would not want).

## Monitor and evaluate the parents' participation in the system, and give them a role in evaluating the children's progress

When parents are involved in the distance education system, it is essential that they also be involved in the evaluation and improvement of the system. They can not only provide essential feedback on the progress of their child and the way in which they experience the teaching, but also on their own experience and feeling about their relay role.

**SESOBEL** has put an evaluation system in place via Zoom conferences with parents over two years. These collective and individual meetings (once or twice per year) aimed to bring up difficulties and see what they would like to change in order to improve the system.

The videos and photos that the parents shared showing their work with their child at home also allowed **SESOBEL**'s team to evaluate the children's acquisitions using this new format, and to readjust the goals and sessions over time.

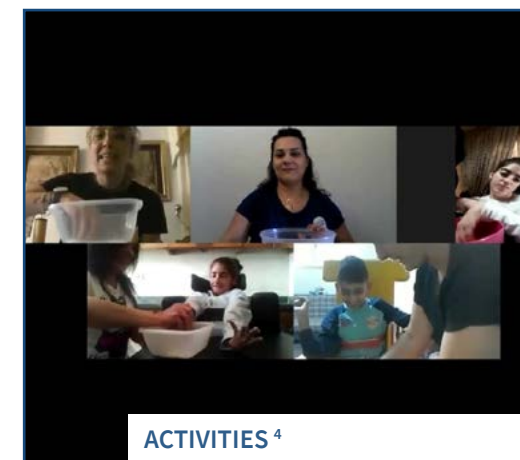
## Why is this interesting?

The active participation of parents as relays/training facilitators makes it possible to create a new, more complementary three-way relationship between children, teachers, and therefore parents:

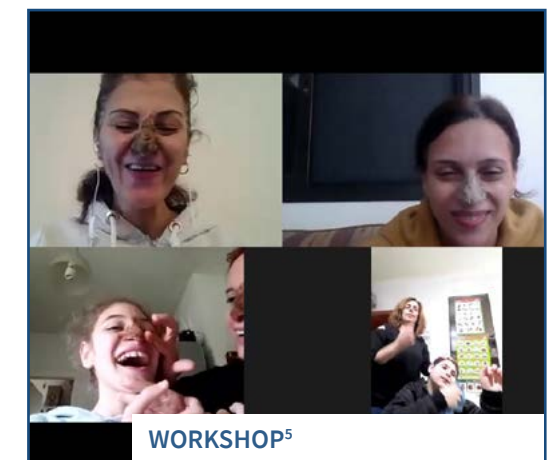
- They prevent their child from dropping out of school, they are the first point of contact for the educator, and, by participating in their child's motivation, by translating instructions...;
- They better understand the educators' role and difficulties they face, and gain confidence through their work; this creates a bond with the educators;
- They also learn new ways to support their child's education even outside of school hours;
- Class time becomes family time, moments to share.

## Points to watch out for

- Strengthening the parents' role does not create less work for the educators, who need to adapt, but ensures the coherence and continuity of education;
- Normal work schedules do not always correspond with the best conditions for the parents to be available, and subsequently, may sometimes need to be modified;
- Work needs to be very organized (well outlined) and not spontaneous;
- Parents' involvement cannot be solely collective;
- Parents can put their child in a bad mood if they take on a "bad attitude" by taking their child's place or judging them;
- Parents often have other children and other issues; it is important not to judge the families in order to help them improve, build trust, and provide them with more holistic support.



ACTIVITIES<sup>4</sup>



WORKSHOP<sup>5</sup>

4 - Parents preparing to lead an activity for their children, with the help of an educator.  
5 - Parents having fun with their kids during an online beauty workshop.

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The association PARTAGE helps the most disadvantaged children in the world to grow up in the respect of their fundamental rights.

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