

Building partnership with parents in inclusive ECEC

Partnership with parents in IECE

Prof. dr. Elisabeth De Schauwer

dr. Silke Daelman

Ghent University

October 2022

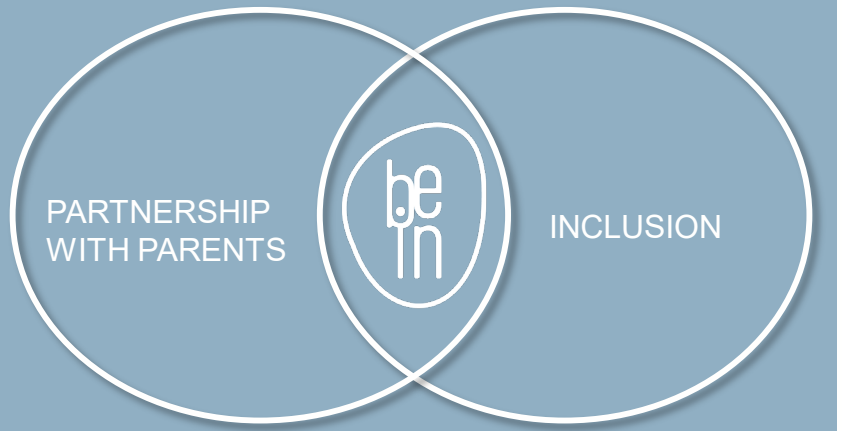


Co-funded by the European Union

A literature review in a ready-to-share format

Co-funded by the European Union

The partners from the **Erasmus+ project Be-In** worked during three years at the intersection of those those important aspects of ECEC: inclusion and partnership with parents. Coming from three different contexts (Iceland, Belgium and Portugal), it was necessary to give us a common framework to align our work in the same direction and allow in-depth discussion between the partners. The partners from Ghent University conducted a scoping literature review on both topic to provide all partners with definition of important concept, and a conceptual framework to start working from. They presented their literature review in two presentations, one on each focus topic, during the Be-In training week in October 2022, in Águeda, Portugal. This format allowed all partners to translate and use the presentation slides with their own teams, partners and students back home. As such, we decided to share it in that same ready-to-share format.



This presentation is therefore meant to be used, shared, adapted.

- Onder each slide, in the presentation notes, we'll find extended explanations and extra references on what is presented on the slide.
- You can adapt the slides easily to another presentation format, most titles, text and color should adjust automatically.
- Please always mention the reference and logo:

Adapted from De Schauwer, E. & Daelman, S. (2022). Inclusion in ECEC. Be-In Eramus+ project. http://vbjk.be/en/project/be-in

Building affirmative and productive parent–professional partnerships

Importance and benefits of engaging parents in their child's education and care

Ambivalence and obstacles are common...



In this presentation

1. Parents' positions and identities
2. Enabling care
3. Partnership in connective collaboration
4. Parents and children – meeting difference

1 Parents positions and identities

1.1 Working with parents of children with special needs

1.2 The distributed parents

1.3 Uncertainties and ambiguities

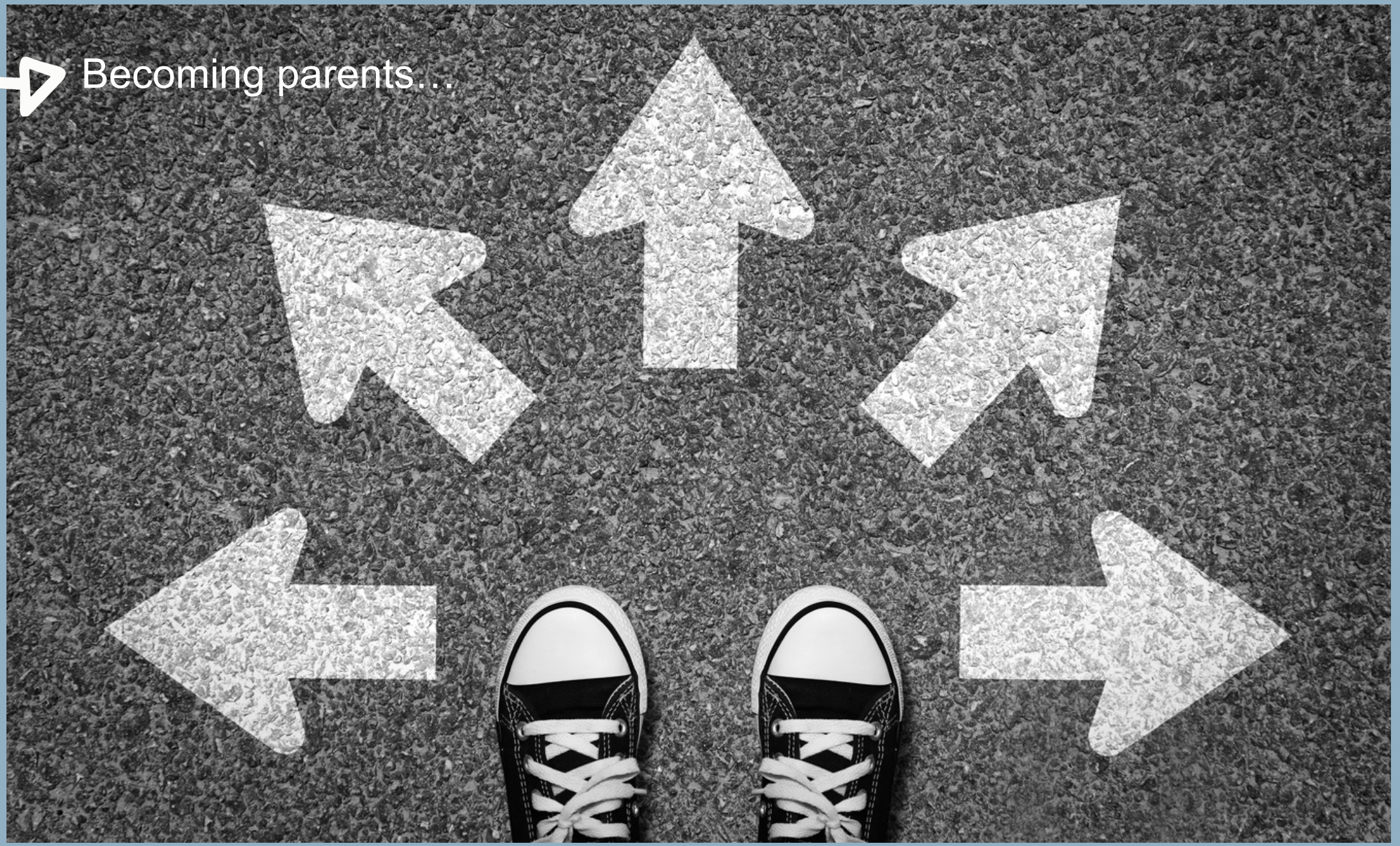


1.1 Working with parents of children with special needs

- Parents = most influential force in policy & design of services for children with special needs
- Importance of strong network for children - makes difference
- Strong AND vulnerable: build connections - great responsibility
- Not always making the choices they want to make
- passive AND active partnership: listen and suffer >< be involved and have voice
- Often research has identified a host of subject positions occupied by parents and/or mothers: fighting parents, disabling parents, tragic parents, empowering parents.



Becoming parents…

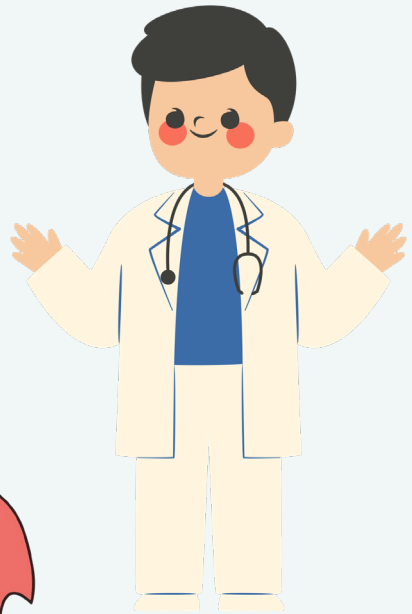


1.2 The distributed parents

Many roles and experiences

- The expert
- The allied parent
- The professional
- The governed parent









1.2 The distributed parents

The expert

- Parents know their child best
- Sophisticated knowledge
- Different contexts
- Advocates - supporters



1.2 The distributed parents

The allied parent

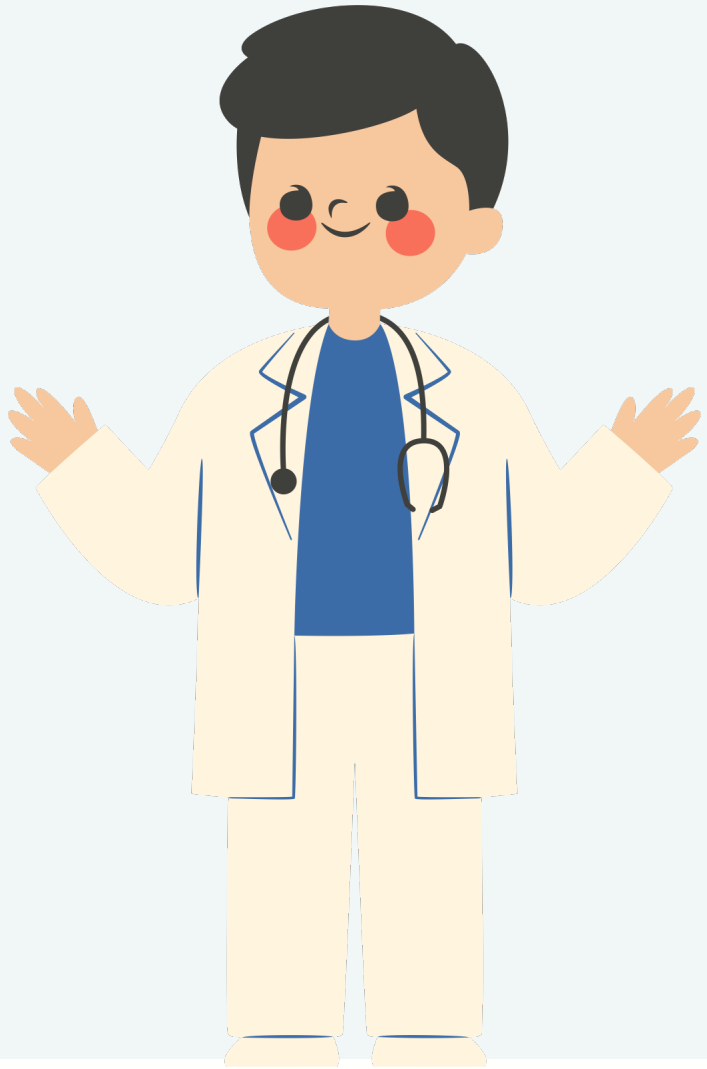
- Experience discriminatory and exclusive practices
- Fight for child's support and benefits
- Alliances with other parents
- Abandoning medical labels and emphasizing humanity



1.2 The distributed parents

The professional

- Organizing professional networks – ‘manager’
- Appropriating professional discourses and specialist practices
- Recognition of parent position?



1.2 The distributed parents

The governed parent

- Under a looking glass - in the spotlights
- Impact of professional presence
- Heightened expectations



1.3 Ambiguities and uncertainties



Loving their child as it is ⇌ wishing they could erase the difficulties

Dealing with incurability ⇌ searching solutions

Urge for and resistance to professional advice

High hopes for the future ⇌ battling fears and insecurity

Being overly protective ⇌ emphasizing a life as full as possible for the child

Taking control in caring ⇌ in need of support and network around the family

Evolving support questions ⇌ difficulty in expressing them

② Enabling care



2 Enabling care

- Enabling possibilities for parents and children
- Providing space to shape their lives and support
- Respect vision of what a flourishing life is
- Providing space to explore and experiment with disability and potential
- Recognizing important parent knowledge
- Placing care within a rights model on inclusion
- Exploring transformation that occur through caring relations
- Acknowledging injustices embedded in professional judgements
- Consider social responsibilities and engagement



2 Enabling care

- Warm welcome
- Real contact and trust
- Mutual feedback
- Extra attention for the child, the parents and the context
- Continuation of resources and tools
- Openness in difficult situations and look for solutions
- Acknowledging challenges and collective search





Recognizing interdependency

Children as interconnected subjects

Entangled networks of family, professionals and community

Distributed competence

③ Partnership in connective collaboration



3 Partnership in connective collaboration

Collaborating with parents

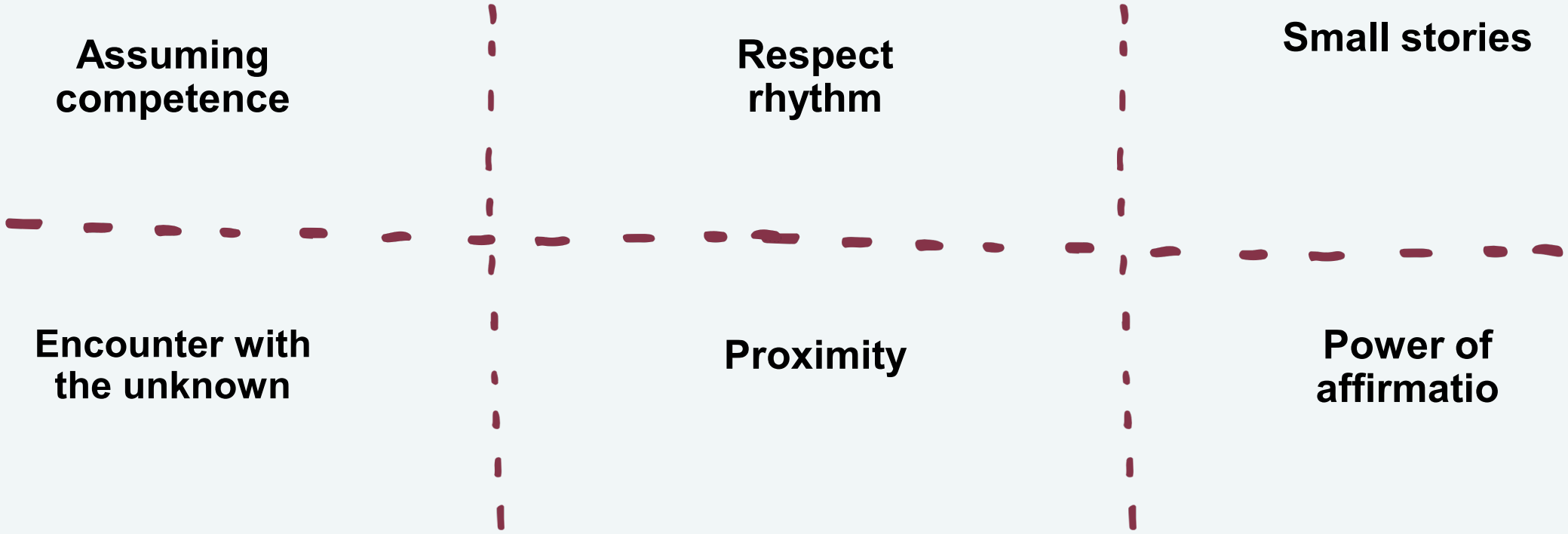
Practical tips to improve parent involvement (European Commission, 2020)

- Informing parents about what we can offer
- Inviting them in the ECEC
- Selecting appealing activities
- Developing inter-generational activities with grandparents
- Developing parent tot parent support activities
- Allocating space to work with parents
- Providing feedback to parents
- Sharing weekly/daily schedule
- Increasing opening hours
- Involving parents in decision making
- Developing a parent council
- Inter-agency parent support
- Information on IT platform

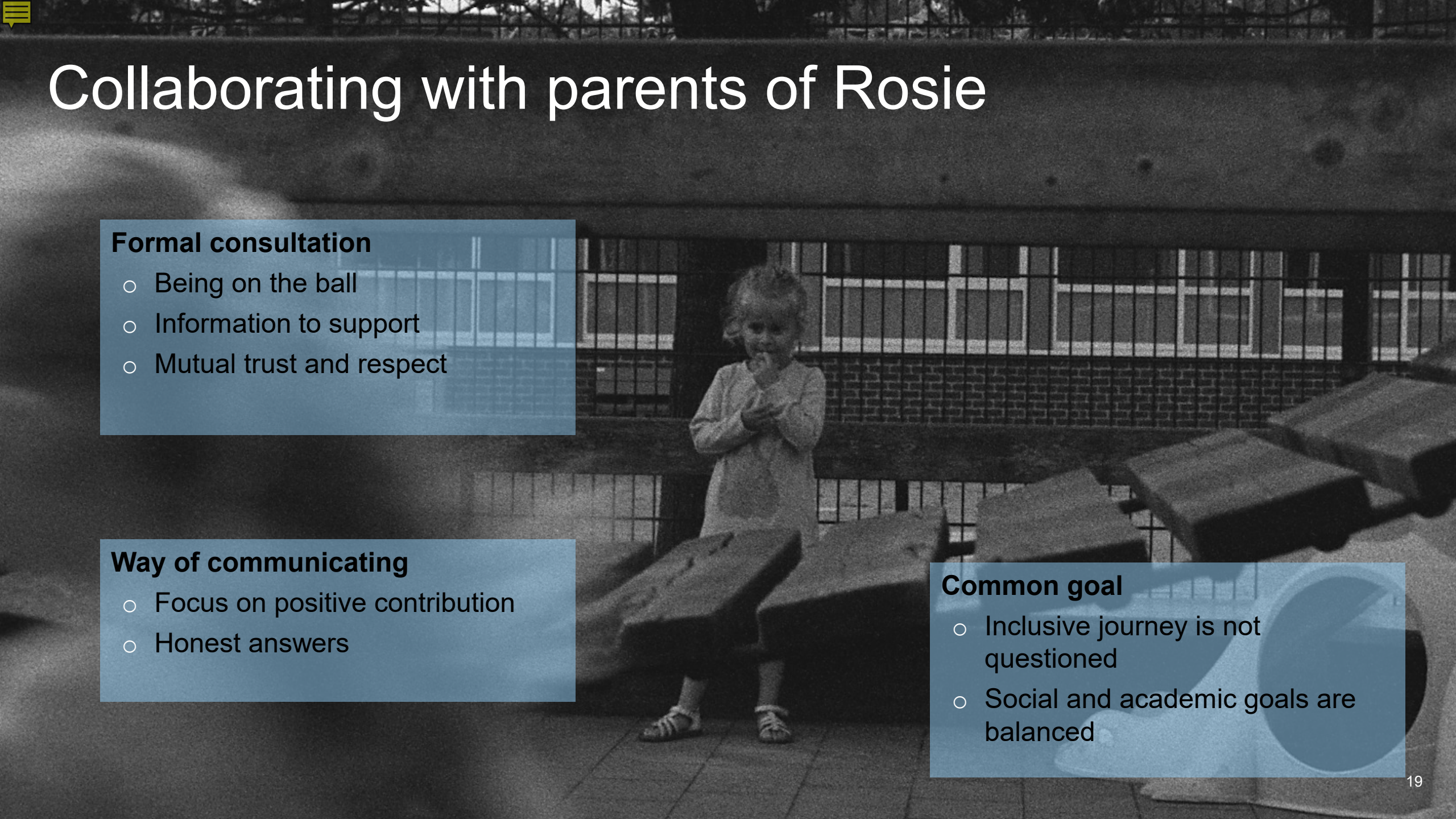


3 Partnership in connective collaboration

Establishing collaborative relationships



Collaborating with parents of Rosie



Formal consultation

- Being on the ball
- Information to support
- Mutual trust and respect

Way of communicating

- Focus on positive contribution
- Honest answers

Common goal

- Inclusive journey is not questioned
- Social and academic goals are balanced

3 Partnership in connective collaboration

Interprofessional collaboration

= being prepare to:

- to leave one's own professional territory;
- value and use the experiential knowledge of children and parents;
- make room for the expertise and input of colleagues (also from other disciplines);
- appreciate the expertise and vision of colleagues as complementary and enriching;
- give space to multiple perspectives and views;
- learning to make translations both literally and figuratively (jargon)
- importance of accessibility in many forms
- give weight to the voice of children and parents
- claim and use their professional space in their own organisation.



④ Parents and children meeting difference



4 Parents and children – meeting difference

"Differences can open up space to look for potentialities for conceptualizing disability (difference) not (always) as a lack but an opportunity to revise notions of normality, independence and autonomy. "
(Goodley et al., 2014)

Importance of support

- ACTION-ORIENTED
- Starting from strengths and interests of children
- DIALOGUE
- Exploring how to access classroom events, information and relationships
- Importance of a positive and safe environment - instead of intervening on the individual
- Output: higher interdependence, productivity and satisfaction

Importance of listening

- Always openness to review things - do not remain fixed forever and ever - belief in unconditional changeability
- Following the story - what pops up in the moment? - sensitive and responsive
- We are not separate from encounter, we become through encounter with others.
- Focused on what we do not yet know

Partnership with parents in IECEC

Learning to deal with contradictions

- How can professionals move away from labelling and consciously deal with the stigmatising influence of labels while acquiring the knowledge and expertise associated with labels?
- How can professionals gain insight into the surrounding structures and organisation of systems that shape and guide how they work while not losing sight of the interests and uniqueness of the people they work with?
- How can teachers/carers develop into independent professionals with responsibility while learning to depend on others (professionals and non-professionals) in support and collaboration?



References

Daelman, S., Van de Putte, I., & De Schauwer, E. (2024). “My Story is Not a Pink Story”: Enabling Care in a Research-Creation Practice with Parents of a Disabled Child in Inclusive Trajectories. Critical Arts, 38(4-5), 211-226.

Daelman, S., De Schauwer, E., & Van Hove, G. (2022). Connective Collaboration Around Alex–A Constant Searching Around Inclusive Education. Journal of Disability Studies in Education, 3(1), 29-56.

Daelman, S., & De Schauwer, E. (2024). Ethical dimensions in encounters with families with a disabled child. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology*, *66*(5), 559-563.

De Schauwer, E., & Davies, B. (2015). Crossing thresholds with a child with a disability. *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research*, *4*(4), 83-98.

De Schauwer, E., Vandenbussche, H., & Van Hove, G. (2023). ‘Everything is there, but they don't bring it to your front door…’An analysis of the perception of early childcare by parents of children with disabilities. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, *31*(1), 64-74.

Goodley, D. (2007). Becoming rhizomatic parents: Deleuze, Guattari and disabled babies. *Disability & Society*, *22*(2), 145-160.

Goodley, D., Lawthom, R., & Runswick Cole, K. (2014). Posthuman disability studies. *Subjectivity*, *7*, 342-361.

McLaughlin, J., Goodley, D., Clavering, E., Fisher, P., Goodley, D., & McLaughlin, J. (2008). Theorising parents, professionals and disabled babies. *Families Raising Disabled Children: Enabling Care and Social Justice*, 1-20.

Van Hove, G., De Schauwer, E., Mortier, K., Bosteels, S., Desnerck, G., & Van Loon, J. (2009). Working with mothers and fathers of children with disabilities: Metaphors used by parents in a continuing dialogue. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, *17*(2), 187-201.