

# Create a welcoming environment where parents and whānau can openly discuss concerns

A suggestion for implementing the strategy 'Support reciprocal relationships' from the Guide: [Parents, whānau, and communities](#)

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## **Includes:**

- Listen to parents
- Demonstrate care of students
- Connect with families
- Value and act on parent concerns
- Identify barriers
- Useful resources

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Partnering with parents, whānau, and communities](#)

Strategy: [Support reciprocal relationships](#)

Suggestion: [Create a welcoming environment where parents and whānau can openly discuss concerns](#)

Date

25 June 2026

Link

[inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/partnering-with-parents-whanau-and-communities/create-a-welcoming-environment-where-parents-and-whanau-can-openly-discuss-concerns](https://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/partnering-with-parents-whanau-and-communities/create-a-welcoming-environment-where-parents-and-whanau-can-openly-discuss-concerns)

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## Listen to parents

Consider these suggestions from parents to support relationship building.

- ✓ Be open and welcoming to parents and their children.
- ✓ Create opportunities and time for parents and whānau to talk to teachers about their children's learning and well-being.
- ✓ Have interpreters available to support parents and overcome language barriers.
- ✓ Identify appropriate staff as key contact people for specific groups of parents.

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## Demonstrate care of students

Manaakitanga, or care for students' well-being and learning, provides a common purpose and bond with parents and whānau.

Care can be demonstrated through making the time and effort to build positive relationships with students, their whānau, and their communities of support.

It is a mark of respect and an indication that everyone's contribution is valued.

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## Connect with families

Making connections between what the student does at home, and with their family, supports and extends learning.



Video hosted on Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/100662396>

Closed Captions

Source:

[Ministry of Education, inclusive education videos \(NZ\)](#)

<https://vimeo.com/album/2950799>

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## Value and act on parent concerns

We thought something was wrong for a long time but we couldn't put our finger on it. We mentioned our concerns to the school but, because our child was coping, the school didn't see any reason to suspect any issues. It made us feel powerless. We felt like we were sticking our noses in, and we very nearly gave up. We wanted our child to reach their potential, not battle and hide their difficulties.

**Parent feedback from the Kip McGrath Education Centre**

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## Identify barriers

Consider potential barriers to families sharing concerns.

- ✓ Unsure who is the right person to talk to.
- ✓ Experiences of their concerns being dismissed in the past.
- ✓ Language and cultural barriers.
- ✓ Experience the perception that their child is seen as a problem.
- ✓ Teachers using language that implies a deficit view of diversity and disability.
- ✓ Inflexible school or class processes and protocols.
- ✓ Teachers being unavailable or setting aside too short a time for discussion.
- ✓ A lack of flexible options for communication.
- ✓ No processes for timely responses.

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## Useful resources



### Learning Support

This site provides practical information about education for families and whānau of children with diverse learning needs. It describes the New Zealand education system and Ministry of Education services.

Publisher: Ministry of Education NZ

[Visit website](#)



### Inclusive education: Resources

Videos and resources from Alberta Education relating to inclusive education.

Publisher: Government of Alberta

[Visit website](#)

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