Caregivers' Guide
to Inclusive Education

April 2022

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Contents

Starting information

Let's start with some frequently asked questions

Who should use this guide?

This guide is for parents and other caregivers of children with disabilities. It is designed to help you support your child with learning in a mainstream or inclusive school environment.

How should I use this guide?

Use the steps in this guide to understand your child's needs and what challenges you may face in meeting them. You can find solutions for these challenges in the linked documents: *Workbook and Directory of Resources*.

Is this suitable for my child's specific disability?

The approach in this guide can be used with children of any ability. However, many of the resources in the Directory of Resources are most suitable for children aged 3–12 with development delays, autism spectrum disorder, visual and/or hearing impairments.

Who can help me with using this guide?

The best way to get help is to work with your child's teachers and specialists at your child's school. You can also look for external support in the *Directory of Associations and Organizations*.

Introduction

As a parent or caregiver of a child with disabilities you play a crucial role in supporting your child's learning. This includes navigating the education system and supporting your child's participation in an inclusive school. The experience you have in raising your child has prepared you to be resilient, to handle uncertainty and to solve problems.

However, you may still face several challenges in this role. Periods of remote learning and other restrictions because of COVID-19 can add to these challenges, for example by making it more difficult to access information or speak to the right person.

This guide is designed for you, as a parent or caregiver of a child with disability, to:

Step 1	Understand your rights under [country] inclusive education laws and what additional supports your child may need from their school and teachers.
Step 2	Understand the challenges or barriers you face in supporting your child's learning needs.
Step 3	Find solutions that can help you address the challenges that you face in supporting your child's learning needs.

You received this guide as part of a pack. Use the steps in this guide to understand your child's needs and what challenges you may face in meeting them. You can find solutions for these challenges in the linked documents: Workbook, Directory of Resources and Directory of Associations and Organizations.

See the next page for more information on these linked documents and how you can use them.

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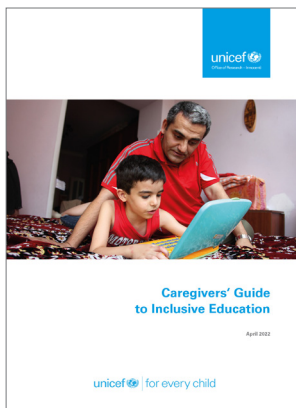
This **Guide** to Inclusive Education is the first document of the series. Your child's teacher and school also received similar guides. This guide will help you to understand your rights, identify your needs and the challenges you face, and find ways to come up with solutions.

The **Workbook** contains tools that can help you think more about and work on the questions raised in this guide. These tools will help you think about the specific solutions that you may need and how you can get them.
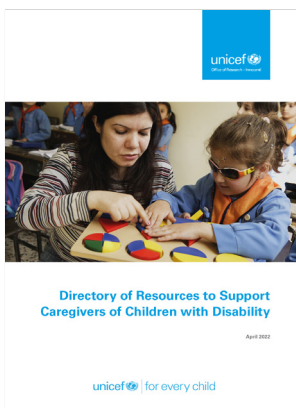
The **Directory of Resources** has helpful materials, information and links. It is a useful first place for you to look for solutions to challenges you have identified. All the resources are free, although you may need to ask your child's teacher or school for help to print the materials.

The summary table on page 4 tells you what challenge, need and age group each resource is best suited for.

The **Directory of Associations and Organizations** has a list of local associations and organizations that exist to connect and support parents and caregivers like you. Some of them may be a good source for more information, ideas for solutions and ways to connect with others.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY NEEDS

What is inclusive education?[1]

All children are learners, and all children are unique.

Inclusion is much more than just physically 'being there' at school. It is what happens when someone is not left out of the classroom, of learning and curriculum, of play time, of relationships with teachers and other children, and every other aspect of school life. Children with disabilities are at greater risk of being excluded, so inclusion is all about making sure this doesn't happen.

What does an inclusive school look like?

- All children are included in the general education classroom all day, every day

- All students are working in naturally supportive, flexible structures and groupings with other students regardless of individual ability

- All students are assumed to be competent and able

- Students are supported (where needed, such as through curriculum adaptations and differentiated teaching) to access the core curriculum

- All students are known and valued as full members of the school community, developing meaningful social relationships with peers and able to participate in all aspects of the life at the school

In the Workbook, see Tool 1: School self-assessment on inclusion for some guiding questions on what you should expect to see in an inclusive school.

What does the law say about your child's rights to inclusive education?

Inclusion is a right.

- Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes the right to an inclusive education as a human right of people with disabilities. The General Comment No. 4 issued by the UN Committee on the Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities on 26 August 2016 gives guidance to governments, including the [country] government, about what is meant by 'inclusive education' and what they need to do under Article 24. It is an important document that every parent, educator and school administrator should read.

- In [country], [key inclusive education law and what it says about the rights of children with disability to inclusive education]

What are your child's needs?

One of the most important things you can do to support your child to have a successful inclusive school experience is to be clear about what you want for your own child. You can write down this vision and share it with your child's teachers and other school staff at the start of each school year. This is a positive way to start an important dialogue with your child's school about your hopes and aspirations.

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1   This entire section is adapted from All Means All's Inclusion Toolkit for Parents

A good way to start imagining your child's positive schooling experience is to talk to them about what they value about going to school. Asking yourself the following questions may also help:

- What is my child's history?
- What are my dreams for my child?
- What are my nightmares about my child?
- Who is my child?
- What are my child's individual needs?
- What would my child's ideal day at school look like?
- What must we do to make that day a reality?
- What would I like my child to be able to do when they leave the school system?

It can be helpful to think about different areas of need for your child's development:

- **Cognition and learning,** including general and specific learning difficulties
- **Communication and interaction,** including speech, language and communication needs
- **Sensory and physical needs,** including visual and hearing impairments
- **Emotional and mental health,** including behavioural and emotional issues

In the Workbook, see Tool 5: Sample Individual Education Plan to help you present to the teacher the information on how your child likes to learn. Work with your child's teachers and any other caregivers to identify what your child's specific needs are. Your vision for your child should guide the development of the goals in your child's individual education plan.

What do you need to do to help your child?

You can help build a positive relationship with your child's teacher and school, including by:

- Having regular communication, both formal and informal;
- Giving positive feedback when you see successes;
- Being constructive when you see challenges;
- Looking for opportunities to help teachers in the classroom;
- Recognizing that teachers have your child's best interests at heart;
- Letting teachers know that you appreciate their efforts.

There are also ways that you can support your child's learning at home, including by:

Helping your child with learning activities such as reading together, discussing a story, working on a puzzle or with blocks, etc.

Regularly playing with your child

Asking your child about what they did and learned at school

Asking your child's teacher about how you can support your child at home
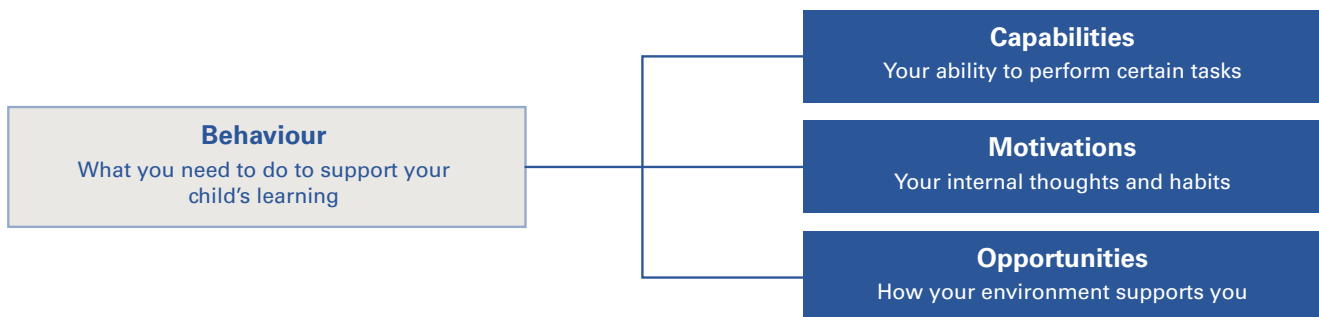
In the Workbook, you can use **Tool 3: Caregiver self-assessment on learning involvement** to identify activities and behaviours that you may want to improve on or need support with.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY CHALLENGES

As you better understand your goals for your child's learning, you will also begin to think about what you can do to support your child with learning. It will help to work with your child's teachers, school, and other caregivers to do this. For example, what you need to do to support your child's learning may be reading to them every day, asking them about their schoolwork or speaking with your child's teachers about their progress.

In this next step, you can then ask yourself: What are the barriers or challenges I face in supporting my child's learning needs?[2]

It may be useful to think about three types of possible challenges you face when it comes to meeting your child's learning needs: **Capabilities, Motivations and Opportunities.**

Behaviour		Capabilities
What you need to do to support your child's learning		Your ability to perform certain tasks
		Motivations Your internal thoughts and habits
		Opportunities How your environment supports you

Capabilities

Capabilities refers to our physical or psychological ability to perform certain behaviours. Think about what you need to do to support your child, and ask yourself the following questions about your abilities:

- **Cognitive skills:** Do I understand what I need to do? Do I know how to do it? or Do I know how to access specialist services?

- **Interpersonal skills:** Do I know how to talk to people, advocate or negotiate for what I need?

- **Awareness:** Do I know the options available to me?

- **Evaluating options and making decisions:** Can I evaluate the different options available and make the right decisions?

- **Attention span:** Will what I need to do capture and hold my attention?

- **Memory:** Will I remember to do what I need to do?

- **Physical ability:** Do I have the physical ability to do it?

Opportunities

This refers to anything in your environment that may encourage or discourage a behaviour. Think about what you need to do to support your child's learning needs, then ask yourself the following questions about your environment:

- **Opportunities in the environment:** Are there opportunities in my environment to do it? Does my environment make what I need to do difficult or impossible?

- **Resources and time:** Do I have the resources and the time to do what I need to do?

- **Prompts in the environment:** Does my environment encourage or discourage me to do what I need to do?

- **Role models:** What role models in my environment will encourage me to do it?

- **Social and cultural norms:** Is it the norm in my community to do it? Will others think badly of me if I do it?

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2   These barriers and questions were adapted from the Behavioural Insights Team's Barrier Identification Tool.

Motivations

Motivations are internal thoughts or automatic processes that motivate or prevent a behaviour. Think about what you need to do to support your child's learning needs, and ask yourself the following questions about your motivations:

- **Identity:** Is what I need to do in line with how I see myself?

- **Beliefs about consequences:** Will my behaviour lead to a positive or negative outcome? Is this outcome likely to happen? What impact will it have?

- **Emotions:** How do I feel when I do it? How do I feel about doing it?

- **Goals:** Do I have a clear goal or target? Is the goal a priority for me?

- **Beliefs in abilities:** Do I believe I can do it?

- **Habits:** Is the behaviour a habit?

- **Accountability:** Who will hold me accountable?

- **Automatic responses:** Do I do it without realizing? Is it an automated response that happens outside of my conscious awareness?

In the Workbook, see **Tool 4: Identifying needs, challenges and solutions** for a further activity to help understand the challenges you face.
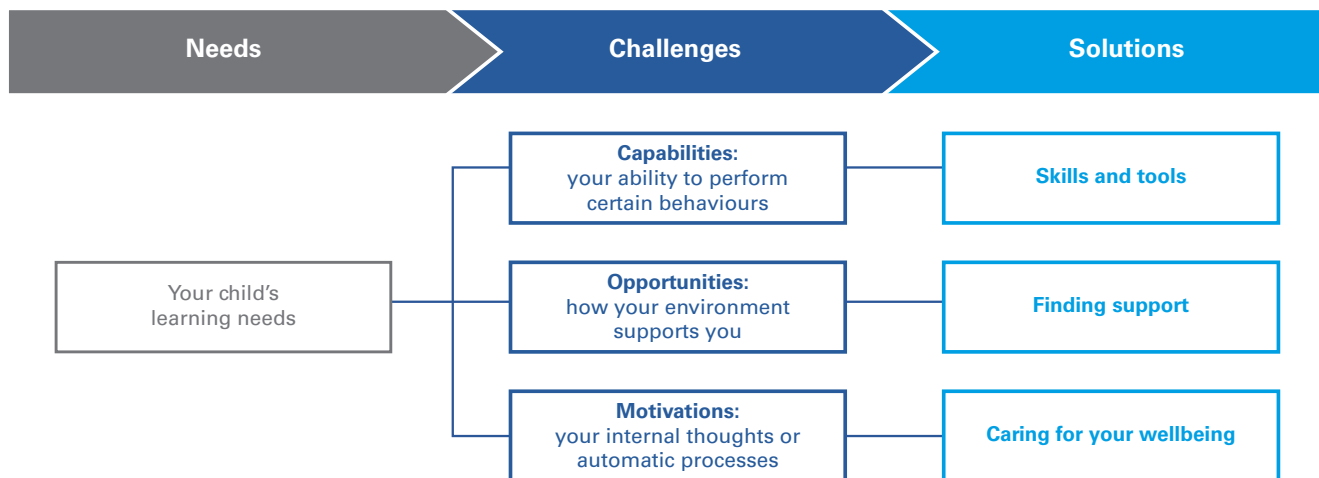
STEP 3: IDENTIFY SOLUTIONS

Once you know the challenges you face in meeting your child's learning needs, you can start to find and try solutions to address them. It can help to prioritize. For example, think of the most important need first, the biggest challenge in meeting that need, and start there.

This section presents several resources that can be solutions to the challenges you face. They are grouped as: Skills and tools; Finding support; and Caring for your wellbeing. The resources you find in each group are broadly focused on addressing each group of challenges:

Needs	Challenges	Solutions

	Capabilities: your ability to perform certain behaviours	**Skills and tools**
Your child's learning needs	**Opportunities:** how your environment supports you	**Finding support**
	Motivations: your internal thoughts or automatic processes	**Caring for your wellbeing**

For a reference you can see some examples of a specific need, a challenge you face in meeting that need, and a solution to help you with that challenge in Tool 4: Identifying needs, challenges and solutions in the Workbook.

It also has a blank table that you can use to write down your own plan to try out solutions to address your current needs and challenges.

Skills and tools

As a caregiver of a child with disability, you may need to learn specialized skills – for example, behaviour management techniques that can help your child. You may also need to learn to use special equipment and assistive devices or tools such as communication tools.

Use the following steps to find the right tool or skills that can address your challenges:

1. Open the *Directory of Resources* as a starting point to find free resources on skills and tools. The table on **page 4** lists tools, linking them with the type of challenge you face, your child's developmental area of need and age group.

2. If none of the resources listed is relevant for you, work with your child's teacher or other specialists at the school. They may be able to suggest other resources.

3. You can also search for other local associations or organizations in the *Directory of Associations and Organizations.* They may be able to link you with other caregivers and suggest other resources to try.

Finding support

Connecting with others who understand your situation can be a great source of support. You can start at your child's school, by speaking with other parents and caregivers of other children with or without disability. Your child's teacher or other staff at your school could help in connecting caregivers together. In thinking about peer support, don't forget about support at home. Who are your child's other caregivers? They may be another parent, a grandparent, an older sibling, or a paid caregiver.

How can your child's other caregivers support you and your child's learning?

- Discuss with them the importance of inclusive education and about your child's learning goals.

- If you are learning a new skill or the use of an assistive tool, try to include these other caregivers. You can practice using the new skill or tool together, reflect and give feedback to one another.

See the *Directory of Associations and Organizations* for a list of local associations of parents like yourself, organizations that represent people with disabilities, and other relevant bodies you can go to for support. You can also ask your child's teacher or other staff at the school if they know of others. Please feel free to add any additional relevant organizations that are not already included in the directory.

Advocating for inclusive education[3]

You know your child and family best. For others to understand what you know, as a caregiver you may need to become an advocate on behalf of your child.

Sometimes you may see a barrier to meeting your child's inclusive learning needs because of something that your child's school or teacher is not providing.

Ask yourself, and discuss with others:

- **Goals:** What changes would you like to see?
- **Actions:** How can you reach your goals?

You can consider the following goals for taking action:

- **Learn:** Understand how inclusive education practices can support your child

- **Organize:** Connect with other parents to talk about the importance of inclusive education and get their support

- **Advocate:** Take action to ensure that your child and all students are provided opportunities to learn

Once you know your goals, here are some actions you can take:

- Sit down with your child and share how important inclusive education and learning in mainstream schools can be. Ask them to identify two or three practices that they think would benefit them.

- Meet with parents of other children with and without disabilities and talk about why inclusive education is important for all your children's future.

- Collectively or individual, meet with school principals, school board members, or district and school-based staff to discuss specific ways that your local school can be more inclusive.

In the Workbook, see **Tool 7: Caregivers' advocacy kit for inclusive education** for further guidance and roadmap to getting support to meet your child's needs.

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3   This section was adapted from National Center for Learning Disabilities' Parent Advocacy Toolkit on 21st Century Learning and Inclusion

Caring for your wellbeing

Being a caregiver, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, can be stressful. Take care of yourself, so you can support your child. During difficult times, try to:

- **Take a pause:** When you feel stressed, try a short relaxation pause to focus on your breath.

- **Remember that you are not alone:** Millions of people have the same fears as us. Keep connected with people who understand your situation. Share your challenges AND successes.

- **Take a break:** We all need it sometimes. When you get the chance, do something fun or relaxing that you like to do.

Some things can make us get stressed and angry. Try to think about what makes you angry. When does it happen? How do you normally react?

Preventing stress and anger from starting in the first place can help. Get some sleep or rest when you are tired. Try to eat something when you are hungry. Ask someone for support when you are feeling alone.

Having a flexible but consistent daily routine can help create a sense of structure. This will help your wellbeing as well as your child's.

- Make a schedule for you and your child that has time for structured activities as well as free time.

- Your child may want to help plan the routine for the day.

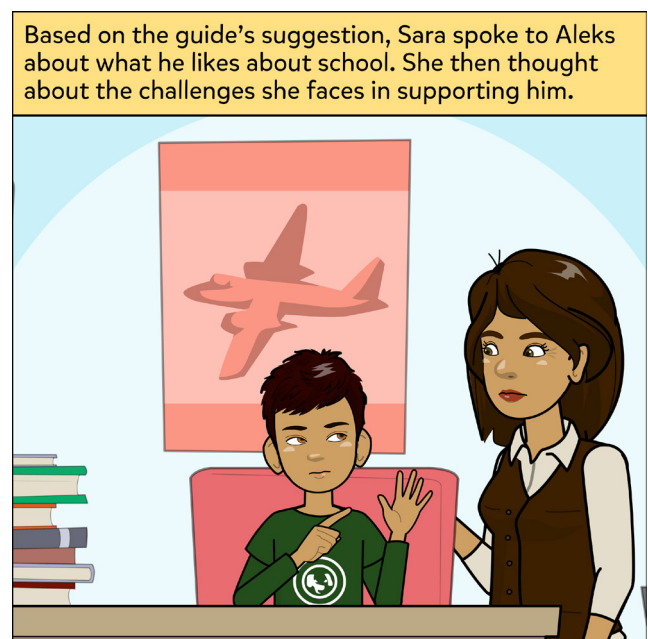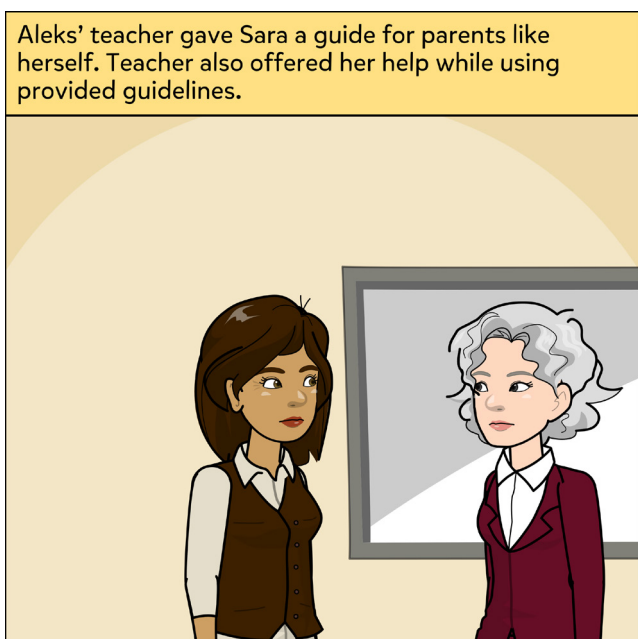- Include exercise in each day.

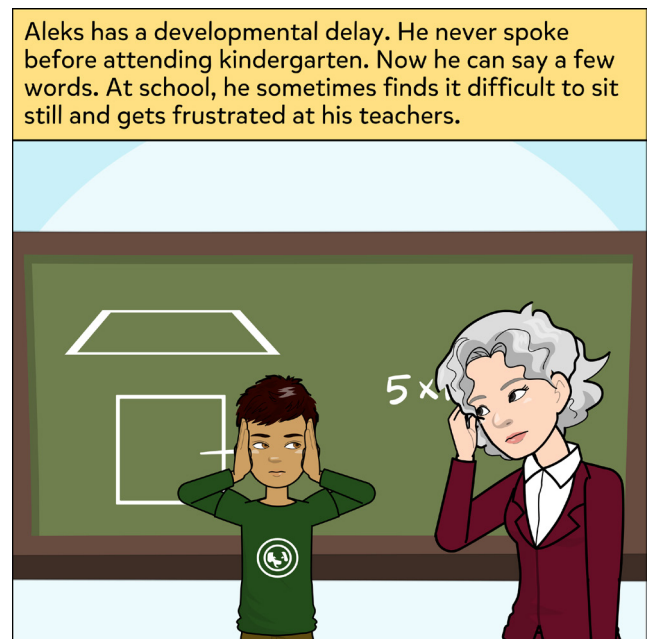At the end of each day, take a minute to think about the day. Tell your child about one positive or fun thing they did. Praise yourself for what you did well today.

You can find one-page tips on Keeping Calm and Managing Stress, Managing Anger, Supporting Children with Disabilities, Education and remote learning, Making a Routine, Family Harmony at Home and Parenting in Crowded Homes and Communities.

Example of the use of these resources

## Real-life story from the use of guide and resources by a caregiver and teacher

The following example came from a trial of the resources in Central Asia (names have been changed), to demonstrate the process of using the guide to identify a child's needs and a caregiver's challenges, and work together to identify solutions to try:

This is Sara and her son Aleks. Aleks used to attend a special kindergarten. For Grade 1, Sara wanted Aleks to be at a primary school with other children including his friends and neighbors.

Aleks has a developmental delay. He never spoke before attending kindergarten. Now he can say a few words. At school, he sometimes finds it difficult to sit still and gets frustrated at his teachers.

Aleks' teacher gave Sara a guide for parents like herself. Teacher also offered her help while using provided guidelines.

Based on the guide's suggestion, Sara spoke to Aleks about what he likes about school. She then thought about the challenges she faces in supporting him.

Together, Sara and Aleks' teacher decided that their priority is to be able to communicate better with Aleks so they can speak to him and understand his needs and feelings.

Priority is to be able to communicate better with Aleks.

Aleks' teacher and the school speech pathologist used the Directory of Resources and suggested that helping Aleks use a communication board.
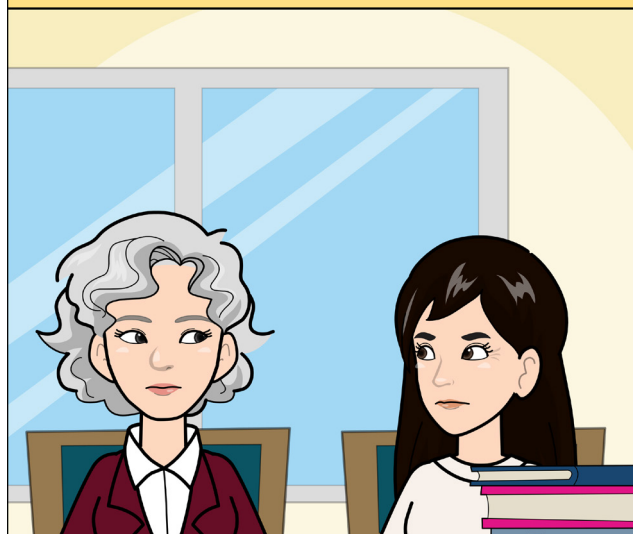
They also worked together to create a visual schedule to talk to Aleks about the day's activities at home and at school.

After a few weeks, Sara was asked about Aleks. She said:

His behavior is getting better. First days he was crying and didn't want to stay at school. Now he became more calm and obey rules.

for every child, answers

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