



Teacher Guide to Supporting Marginalized Caregivers of Children with Disabilities

April 2022

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: This publication is the culmination of a project to develop, disseminate and deliver resources for marginalized parents/caregivers to support continuity of children for learning with disabilities. The project was carried out by UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) and UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, in partnership with UNICEF Armenia and UNICEF Uzbekistan. The project team is deeply indebted to the more than 40 caregivers of children with disabilities, teachers, school psychologists and head teachers in Armenia and Uzbekistan who generously shared their time, experience, and feedback.



UNICEF extends a special thank you to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) for their funding, without which this publication would not be possible.

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Graphic design: Small World Stories

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Starting information

Let's start with some frequently asked questions

Who should use this guide?

This guide is for teachers in classrooms of children with and without disabilities. It helps you support your students' learning by designing and providing targeted support to their parents and caregivers.



How should I use this guide?

Use the steps in this guide to understand your students' different needs and the challenges faced by parents and caregivers in meeting them. You can find solutions for these challenges in the linked documents: *Workbook*, *Directory of Resources*.

Is this suitable for my child's specific disability?

The approach in this guide can be used with caregivers of children with 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?

Your school leader or specialists have also received the resources included with this guide. The best way to use these resources is to work together with them as a team. You can also look for external support in the *Directory of Associations and Organizations*.

Introduction

As a teacher at an inclusive school, you play an important role in making sure that all children feel safe, supported and included. Inclusion is most effective when schools create a culture that celebrates diversity and builds on the strengths of each student.

Building connections with children and their families can support inclusion. Work together to identify learning goals, and to create strategies to achieve these goals.

Family engagement may look different from school to school. It is important to remember that families are always involved in their child's life even in ways we cannot see, understand, or value. Schools need to support families in a variety of ways, not just relying on one method. For example, often teachers contact families only when something is wrong. It is good practice for all teachers to commit to providing some positive feedback every month to each student's family.

Disability is linked with poverty, which has lifelong consequences for children with disabilities. Families of children with disabilities are more vulnerable to poverty. Marginalized families of children with disabilities face additional challenges and barriers, which have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has created a wider learning gap and further marginalization and exclusion.

Marginalized caregivers of children with disabilities can face various challenges and barriers in the newly emerging inclusive settings. Teachers can help caregivers to navigate in this new environment and identify the best ways and materials to support their child's learning.

Purpose

This guide is designed for teachers to:

1. Engage with marginalized caregivers of children with disabilities in identifying their children's individualized learning **needs**.
2. Engage with caregivers to identify the **challenges** in meeting these needs.
3. Engage with caregivers to identify targeted **solutions** in the form of resources to address these challenges.



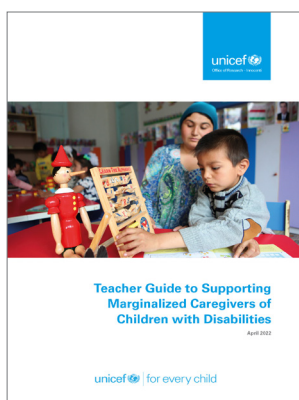
Needs

Challenges

Solutions

Your close engagement with caregivers is essential during all these three stages. All three stages, and your role in them, are described in more detail in the rest of this guide.

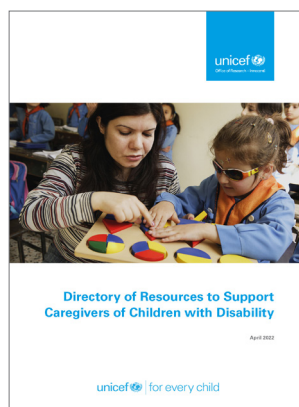
You received this guide as part of a package (see next page). Use the steps in this guide to understand the needs and challenges of caregivers of children with disabilities. You can find solutions for these challenges in the linked documents: *Workbook*, *Directory of Resources* and *Directory of Associations and Organizations*.



This **Guide to inclusive education** is the first document of the series. Your school administration and caregivers of children with disability from your class also received similar guides. This guide will help you to support caregivers to understand their rights, identify their needs and the challenges they face, and find ways to come up with solutions.

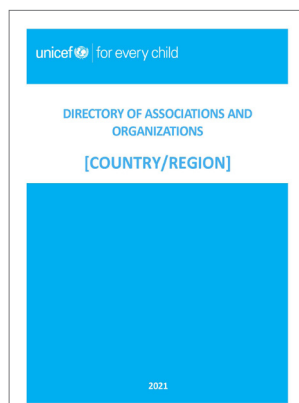


The **Workbook** contains tools that can help you think more about and work on the questions raised in this guide. These tools will help you to come up with specific solutions that caregivers may need. Tools will also show how you can support caregivers.



The **Directory of Resources** has helpful materials, information and links. It is a useful first place for caregivers to look for solutions to challenges they have identified. All the resources are free, although you may help caregivers 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 of children with disabilities. Some of them may be a good source for more information, ideas for solutions and ways to connect with others.

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 presumed 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 life at the school

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

What does the law say about 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]

¹ This entire section has been adapted from All Means All's [Inclusion Toolkit for Parents](#)

STEP 1: IDENTIFYING NEEDS OF MARGINALIZED CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Identifying target audience: marginalized caregivers of children with disabilities

Marginalized caregivers of children with disabilities are the target audience of these activities. As a teacher working in an inclusive school, you can support these caregivers through understanding their needs and link them to resources, which can be beneficial for their child's learning both at school and at home. Some of these challenges are universal; however, the next section provides a questionnaire to be used for identifying more specific needs.

The first step in teachers being able to address needs of children with disabilities in schools and challenges faced by their caregivers is to understand what they are and how to identify them. You will begin by answering these three questions:

- Do you have information on disabilities and/or on special education needs of children enrolled in your classroom? Beyond any specific diagnoses that a child may have, it can also be helpful to think about the different areas of needs for the 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
- Do you know the marginalized families of children with disability enrolled in your classrooms? If yes, do you communicate with them to update them on their child's learning of and provide personalized feedback?
- What are the challenges faced by caregivers of children with disabilities in supporting and meeting their child's needs?

For a more comprehensive assessment you can use **Tool 2: Teacher self-assessment on inclusive education** from the *Workbook*, which can help you understand where you are with inclusive education and identify areas where you may need further support.

You can also work with caregivers to ask them the questions from the *Workbook's* **Tool 3: Caregiver self-assessment on learning involvement** to understand what they are already doing at home and where they may need support.

STEP 2: IDENTIFICATION OF CHALLENGES

Once you have a better understanding of what caregivers need to do to support their children's learning, this stage asks you to find out what challenges they face in meeting these needs. The main objective of this step is to help you understand specific challenges faced by marginalized families of children with disabilities when it comes to assisting their children in the learning process.

It is helpful to think of these needs in terms of three possible types of challenges:

- **Capabilities:** physical and psychological ability to perform certain tasks;
- **Opportunities:** anything in the environment that may encourage or discourage a behaviour;
- **Motivations:** what caregivers need to do to support their children in their learning.

The main reason for categorizing these needs is to help 'match' the type of challenge with the most appropriate support /resource. Why do we want to do this? Putting these challenges and barriers into one of the three main groups will enable the schools to recommend specific interventions that correspond to these challenges. In other words, identifying and then breaking down the information helps in understanding and then addressing the issues in a systematic way.

This step asks you to speak with marginalized caregivers of children with disabilities about the challenges they are facing in supporting their children's learning. You may want to work with other teachers or another school focal point to do this.

Capabilities

Capabilities refers to our physical and psychological ability to perform certain behaviours. What does the caregiver need to do to support their child's learning needs? Think of the following questions when asking caregivers about the challenges they face:

- **Cognitive skills:** Do you understand what you need to do? Do you know how to do it?
- **Interpersonal skills:** Do you know how to talk to people, advocate or negotiate for your needs?
- **Awareness:** Do you know the options available to you?
- **Evaluating options and making decisions:** Can you evaluate the different options available and make the right decisions?
- **Attention span:** Will what you need to do capture and hold your attention?
- **Memory:** Will you remember to do what you need to do?
- **Physical ability:** Do you have the physical ability to do it?

Three examples of specific challenges for the 'capabilities' category are shown below:

Example #1: Caregiver was not able to read and understand all the notes sent by the school

Example #2: Caregiver did not know that there are resources available at the school to assist in helping their child learn better

Example #3: Caregiver got confused with all the help available and cannot select the right type of help

Opportunities

This refers to anything in the environment that may encourage or discourage a behaviour. What does the caregiver need to do to support their child's learning needs? Think of the following questions when interviewing caregivers about their needs:

- **Opportunities in the environment:** Are there opportunities in your environment to do it? Does your environment make what you need to do difficult or impossible?
- **Resources and time:** Do you have the resources and the time to do what you need to do?
- **Prompts in the environment:** Does your environment encourage or discourage you to do what you need to do?
- **Role models:** What role models in your environment will encourage you to do it?
- **Social and cultural norms:** Is it the norm in the community to do it? Will others think badly of you if you do it?

Three examples of specific challenges for the 'opportunities' category are shown below:

Example #1: There is nothing available in the community/neighbourhood that can be useful for the child

Example #2: Caregiver does not have the resources or time to buy (something that is required)

Example #3: Caregiver does not know any other families that succeeded in helping their children with disabilities

Motivations

Motivations are internal thoughts or automatic processes that motivate or prevent a behaviour. What does the caregiver need to do to support their child's learning needs? Think of the following questions when asking caregivers about their needs:

- **Identity:** Is what you need to do in line with how you see yourself?
- **Beliefs about consequences:** Will your behaviour lead to a positive or negative outcome? Is this outcome likely to happen? What impact do you think it will have?
- **Emotions:** How do you feel when you do it? How do you feel about doing it?
- **Goals:** Do you have a clear goal or target? Is the goal a priority for you?
- **Beliefs in abilities:** Do you believe you can do it?
- **Habits:** Is the behaviour a habit?
- **Accountability:** Who will hold you accountable?
- **Automatic responses:** Do you do it without realizing? Is it an automated response that happens outside your conscious awareness?

Here are three examples of specific challenges that would go in the 'motivations' category:

Example #1: Belief that helping children learn is only the responsibility of teachers and specialists, not caregivers

Example #2: Nobody seems to worry or ask about how things are going with caregivers

Example #3: Belief about whether or not caregivers spending time helping their child makes a big difference in their learning

You can use **Tool 4: Identifying needs, challenges and solutions** from the *Workbook* to record the needs and challenges that you identified from talking to caregivers. It includes a sample completed table as well as guiding questions and more examples of challenges



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STEP 3: LINKING THESE CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS

In this third step you will analyse information you collected from caregivers in Step 2 and match them with supports/resources based on the type of challenges faced: capabilities, opportunities or motivations.

Once you know the challenges that caregivers face, you can start working with them to find appropriate solutions. Use the *Directory of Resources* to identify potential solutions.

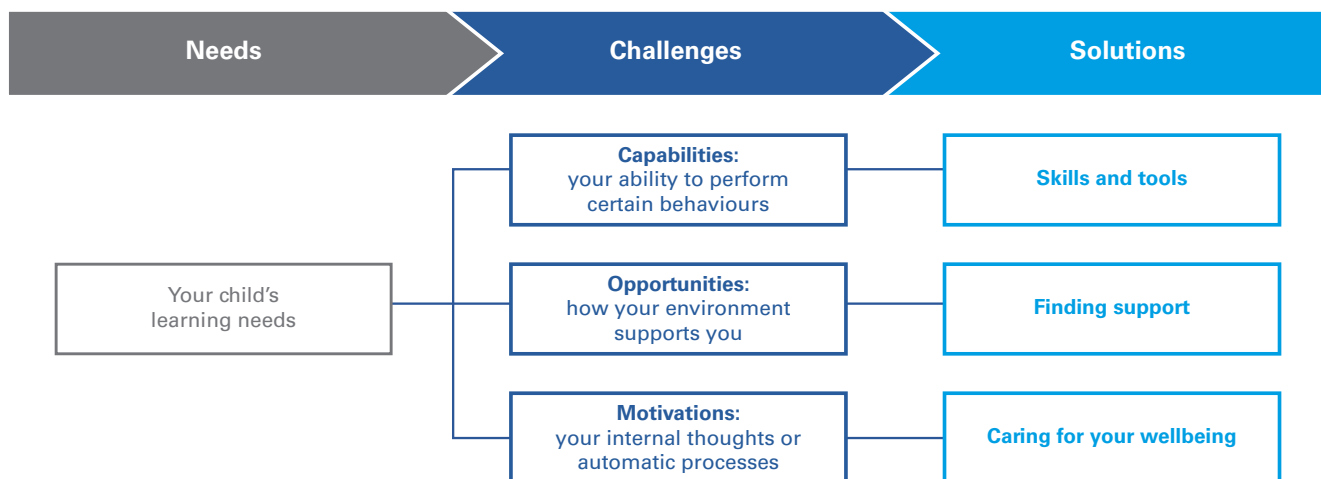
The resources in the directory should be considered as starting points. You should use or add any additional appropriate resources that you think the caregivers could benefit from. If you have access to specialists or other service providers from your school or community, you can also ask them about additional resources that you can add to the directory and share with caregivers.

You can see some examples of a specific need, a challenge that the caregivers face in meeting that need, and a solution to help with that challenge in the *Workbook* **Tool 4: Identifying needs, challenges and solutions**. There is also a blank table that can be used by the caregivers to write down their own plan to try out solutions to address a challenge.

Your role as a teacher is essential in this process. You can help caregivers find the right resource and help them understand how to use it. You can continue to support them by regularly checking in on caregivers' progress in using their resources or providing reminders.

When evaluating different options, it helps to prioritize. For example, identify the most important need or the biggest challenge in meeting that need, and start there.

This section gives an overview of the resources that can be solutions to the challenges faced by caregivers. They are grouped into three categories: 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:



Skills and tools

You may already have a format you prefer for documenting children's individual education plans. If not, you can use **Tool 5: Sample Individual Education Plan** from the *Workbook*.

Be sure to update the plan quarterly and communicate findings with the child's parent/guardian so that effective practices can be used consistently in both the school and home environment. At the end of the year, share the completed Information Sheet with the student's future teacher(s) for their information and preparation.

A good individual education plan would include information from the child's caregivers. You can support caregivers in understanding their child's learning needs, what their goals are for their child, and use this information to

inform the child's individual education plan. **Tool 6: Child's Learning Background Questionnaires** in the *Workbook* can help you collect this information from caregivers.

Caregivers of children with disabilities may also need to learn specialized skills to support their children's learning; for example, behaviour management techniques that can help their children manage various situations at home and in school. Some caregivers may also need help in learning how to use special equipment and assistive devices or tools such as communication tools.

You can support caregivers by helping them select a solution from the *Directory of Resources* that best addresses their challenges.

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

1. Open the *Directory of Resources* as a starting point to find free resources on skills and tools. The table on **page 4** of the directory lists several tools, linking them with the type of challenge caregivers face, their child's developmental area of need and age group.
2. You can also support them in understanding how to use the resource or tool, including accessing and printing the materials, and discussing the steps needed in a way that they understand.
3. If none of the resources listed is relevant for the caregiver, work with them in collaboration with other specialists at the school to suggest any other resources. Feel free to add these resources to the *Directory of Resources*.

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

Finding support

Helping caregivers connect with others who understand their situation can be a great source of support. Teachers can play a big role in connecting parents and caregivers of children with disabilities with each other and with different organizations. Caregivers may or may not come to you for help, but it is good practice for you to have this information readily available to share if they do.

When connecting caregivers with each other for peer support, it is useful to think about extending this support to other family members who are part of the child's life (for example, another parent, grandparents, an older sibling or a paid caregiver).

How can a child's other caregivers support the main caregiver and the child's learning?

- Encourage main caregivers to discuss the importance of inclusive education and their child's learning goals with other caregivers and family members.
- If the main caregiver is learning a new skill or tackling the use of an assistive device or tool, encourage them to include other caregivers in that process by practising the new skill or using the tool together and then reflecting and giving feedback to one another.

Refer caregivers to local associations of parents, organizations that represent people with disability, and other relevant bodies that can be approached for support. A starting point can be the *Directory of Associations and Organizations*. You can add other associations and organizations that you know of in your area, before sharing the list with caregivers.

Advocating for inclusive education²

Caregivers can also be your partners in advocating for inclusive education. Other family members may not support the decision to send a child to an inclusive school or may have other ideas about what should happen with a child's education. Caregivers may need your help in becoming strong or stronger advocates.

A caregiver has the insight on where a child is at when it comes to their learning needs, but they may not always have the right skills or communication tools to express these needs. As an inclusive school, work with your teachers and caregivers by sitting down and discussing these questions:

- **Goals:** What changes would you like to see in your child's learning environment?
- **Actions:** How can the school and teachers help reach these goals?

Once you understand caregivers' needs and goals, you can help in carrying out the following actions:

- Offer to sit down with the caregiver and his/her child and share how important inclusive education and learning in mainstream schools can be. In return, ask them to identify two or three practices that they think would benefit them.
- Organize a meeting with caregivers of other children with and without disabilities and talk about how inclusive education benefits all children and why inclusive education is important for all children's future.
- Be open to meeting with other school staff, school board members, other schools or district education staff to discuss specific ways that your local school can be more inclusive.

You can suggest or support caregivers to use *Workbook* **Tool 7: Caregivers' advocacy kit for inclusive education** as a starting point to produce a roadmap on how to take action to improve inclusive education in their child's classroom, school or local district.

Caring for caregivers' wellbeing³

Being a caregiver, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, can be stressful. As a teacher you can find ways to support caregivers in taking the time to take care of themselves.

Some messages that you may want to share with caregivers to care for their own wellbeing include:

- **Take a pause:** When feeling stressed, it helps to try a short relaxation pause to focus on breath.
- **Remember that they are not alone:** millions of people have the same fears. Try to keep connected with people who understand their situation. Share challenges AND successes.
- **Take a break:** We all need it sometimes. When given the chance, do something fun or relaxing.
- **Exercise:** It can help to include some form of exercise in each day.
- **Reflect:** At the end of each day, think about one positive or fun thing that happened that day.

Find the best way to communicate these short reminders or messages that can help caregivers to stay on track. For example, these one-page tips are available in many languages, including [language] , and can be printed and posted at school or given to caregivers: [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](#).

2 This section was adapted from National Center for Learning Disabilities' [Parent Advocacy Toolkit on 21st Century Learning and Inclusion](#)

3 These tips were adapted from Parenting for Lifelong Health's [COVID-19 Parenting Tips](#).

Example of the use of these resources

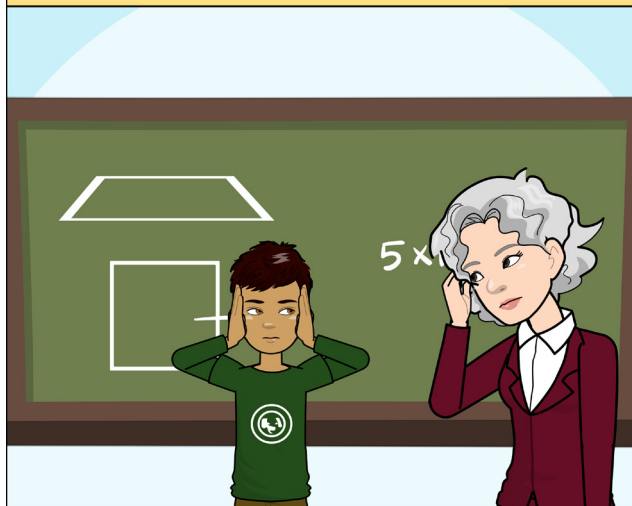
Real-life story from the use of guide and resources by a caregiver and teacher

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

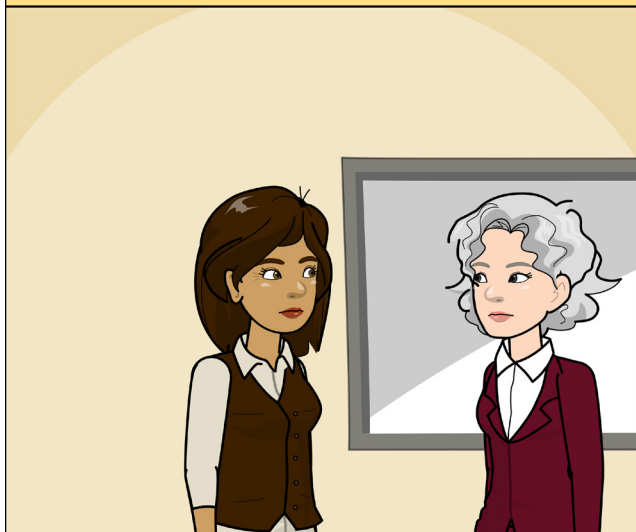
This is Sara and her son Aleks. Aleks used to attend a special kindergarten. For Grade 1, Sara wanted Aleks to be at a primary school with other children including his friends and neighbors.



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.



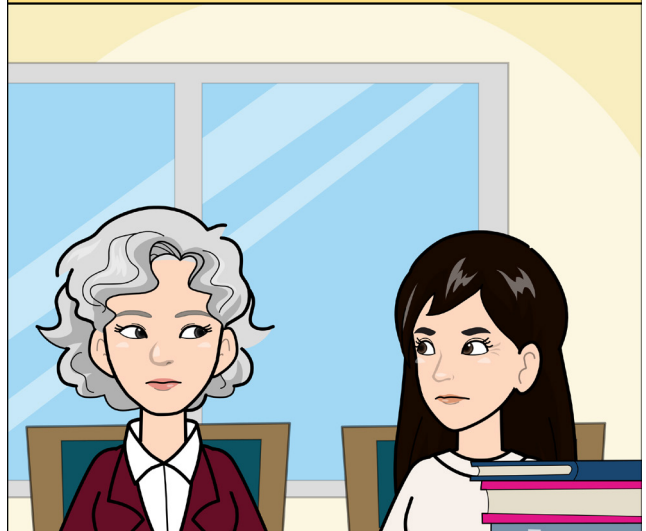
Based on the guide's suggestion, Sara spoke to Aleks about what he likes about school. She then thought about the challenges she faces in supporting him.



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.



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:



for every child, answers

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