School deviance is one of the main problems of today's society and a cause for concern, having turned into a topic of public interest. The present article looks at the significance of the school-family-proximity partnership, underlining both the benefit of prevention and the work of the stakeholders. We shall explore the intervention measures and programs implemented in order to prevent and mitigate school deviance, and discuss the importance of have these evaluated. Also, the article provides examples of international programs and the results of their evaluation, as well as the current national strategy implemented through the recently established National Council for Preventing and Fighting against Violence in Schools.

**Key words:** school deviance, individual responsibility, social responsibility, school social worker, social prevention, situational prevention

School deviance, especially child deviance, is directly related to the degree to which the sense of responsibility is developed. At the beginning of „La geneaologie de la morale“, Nietzsche (1887) introduces „the long history of the origin of responsibility“, stating that responsibility is not an inherent quality of human nature. On the contrary, society „by means of a relentless training“, imposes discipline as a result of res-
ponsible behavior. Responsibility is “the great regulator of social life”, and at the same time, it enables “the paying out of compensation” to victims of antisocial acts, of deviant or criminal deeds. In schools, responsibility is essentially about observing school regulation, while in society it is basically about behaving as a good citizen. To avoid school or social sanctions for different forms of deviance, the pupil’s education about the spirit of responsibility has to start with his/her family who needs to provide guidance on what it means to take responsibility for one’s actions and for their consequences.

In order to enforce „school discipline” and respect for the law, any „offence” has to be followed by a sanction proportional to the severity of the deed. The disconcerting dynamics of deviant behavior among pupils can be explained, in theory, by a disregard for the sanctions established for the committed deeds (breaking various provisions of the school regulation, breaking the rules of conduct in the community etc.)

1. Shaping pupils’ responsible conduct

A responsible conduct of pupils and a mitigated rate of school and social deviant (violent or aggressive) behavior essentially depend on the fostering of school duties.

The wide range of negative phenomena challenging our society can be hypothetically explained by the fact that individual or group responsibility has broadened. Responsible conduct is learned through „family socialization”, but mostly through school education and at the same time through general „societal education”.

Though much has been said and written about education and its role, the topic is far from being exhausted (Monteil, 1997; Stânciulescu, 1998; Hatos, 2006). Thus, all fields that have been studied with regard to impact on man have tackled education in one way or another. As an institution, education grew to be more resistant to outside ad-hoc influences and it became known as a force capable to provide an inside support to the broad processes of valorizing human conduct. In our
contemporary world, education is a critical requirement for all individuals as, without education, one cannot be part of a world in which everything is knowledge-based. Education is crucial to shaping the individual as a person and it allows for the development of values related to the vast area of human knowledge and action. Nowadays, more so than in the past, the youth has an acknowledged right to claim its own identity in the adult society. In the educational process, educators have a significant role, the ultimate goal of education being to foster socialization and accountability.

The interaction between schools and the environment they operate in is key to establishing viable partnerships which can influence and support the educational process: the family, NGOs, local and central government authorities, businesses, all helping the school to achieve its educational mission against the inherent social and economic changes (figure 1). As a social organization with a role of socialization, the school passes on to pupils the values and models promoted by society, interconnecting at a variety of levels with the social, cultural and economic environment. School and family are the two pillars of education, and it is between these two and the settings outside of school or of home that the child, object and subject of education, swings back and forth.

The cooperation between school and family (Miftode, 2000, pp. 139-157) should naturally focus on quality of education: high-level goals, high-level means and tools.

School should encourage families and teachers to establish certain learning/teaching agreements; train managers and other members of the school board; provide topics that parents find engaging; grant parents decision-making rights; create a resource center for parents etc.
It is well known that the secondary school period coincides with puberty, when the child experiences preadolescence and goes through several anatomical, physiological and mental changes. Gymnasium pupils are much more sensitive, at times more quick-tempered than in primary school, showing an increasing attraction for adulthood, they tend to go for those actions that exceed their abilities and life experience and can end badly. The acts of bravery some preadolescents engage in, such as the emancipation from parents or even from school, the desire to explore what life has to offer beyond the everyday setting, the intention to prove themselves especially to the opposite sex, and other such acts, unless known, understood and adequately guided by family and school, may lead to deviations which eventually curb the proper growth of personality. If one gets closer to one’s children, pays more attention to how they behave and offers them a timely support, one can smooth the process of overcoming the various age-specific difficulties and lay the grounds for conducting activities that have obvious formative effects. During secondary school, the list of school duties becomes increasingly longer, pupils are required to be more and more focused, while the rewards for their efforts become higher. Due to the conditions it provides, its adequate understanding of children’s manifestations, its role in expanding their professional horizon and its provision of positive models of social interaction, family helps its young
members to get a good start in life. Depending on the pupils’ interests, concerns, abilities and proficiency, their family can find ways to motivate and engage them in those activities relevant to the children’s desired occupations and which seem reliable and able to maximize their potential. Here, parents can partner with the school to see what works best for their children.

Families should take part in certain specific actions, such as: the preparation of a daily homework plan; reading together with their children; granting access to TV programs wisely; keeping in touch with school teachers; acknowledging children’s efforts by praising them when necessary. School does not hold a monopoly on education, therefore knowledge of the home setting (through questionnaires, interviews or social surveys) is key in planning educational strategies that can ensure a child’s success in school. Communication between school and family should focus on identifying and fighting against those risk factors with negative influence on child education. Providing financial aid through social programs in schools implemented in partnership with the Town Hall, businesses or various NGOs, and job search counseling for parents are examples of necessary support measures.

A deconstructed family environment characterized by parents’ lack of commitment, high leniency with regard to school performance, or domestic violence may have several negative effects, such as repeating school years, discipline problems, vagrancy, dropping out, committing crimes, alcohol and other drug use, etc. These are problems that school can fight against only by teaming up with the school psychological and pedagogical counselor and with the social worker in helping the family and child to become more responsible, initiating programs focused on partnering with parents, organizing educational centers for parents, changing the parent committees into active and connecting elements between school and home. To note, in the case of single parent families, the material, emotional and relation strain can make the parent’s educational role more difficult. However, dysfunctions can also appear
in two-parent families where both spouses have a career, given the broad role of the mother and the secondary educational role played by the father.

The necessary support measures include organizing meetings between parents, psychologists, teachers, social workers to discuss education and its significance; providing parent and pupil counseling; establishing an efficient and motivating rewarding system to encourage school achievement; changing teachers’ attitude to avoid labeling and recognize correctable behavior. Also, setting up parent associations for those parents with children at risk/drop-outs that would focus on: career-counseling; job search strategies; crisis management techniques; strategies for monitoring and managing a pupil’s educational path; organizing educational fairs that update parents on the best schooling options for pupils; job fairs and information about vocational training opportunities for parents; financial aid in the form of school supplies, clothing, pupil transportation from rural to urban areas; conducting social surveys and granting social welfare where applicable.

The school-community relationship shows that school education can contribute to reducing school deviance only if it is open to the community’s and the pupils’ problems. The school-community connection is brought up when addressing „sensitive” issues such as dropout, juvenile deviance and the integration of children with special education needs. From a cultural and support perspective, this relationship can become real by initiating activities that enable pupils to prove what they can do for the community: exhibitions, creation workshops, community engagement through cleaning parks, participating in humanitarian campaigns, volunteering etc. Creating opportunities for engaging community members in pupils’ activities is also worth considering: organizing and funding certain events, participating in aid and support campaigns for gifted pupils from low income families. It is useful to conduct community awareness-raising with regard to the serious nature of school-related problems and their socio-economic consequences for the community, given that poverty-driven
dropping out generates in turn more poverty. A defective school and professional education creates the grounds for high unemployment and poor financial means. Pupils who drop out will not have had a chance to round off the civic culture and ethics needed to be a good community member or parent. Local government authorities can also become involved in the educational and support process by providing funds for repairs or investments to schools and poor families, by helping out with the material resources needed by teachers to conduct their lessons, by participating in projects aimed at reducing the risk of school failure. Facilitating the process of securing additional funds for educational activities such as contests, exhibitions, educational fairs, and organizing out-of-school events are ways of contributing to knowledge assimilation and specific skills development (painting, sculpting, modeling camps etc). The school-businesses partnership is part of a balance between educational demand and supply. Outside funding can be obtained from renting spaces for educational or commercial activities, selling items made by pupils and teachers during fairs or exhibitions; sponsoring various projects; helping with school expenses of gifted pupils from rural areas who have poor financial means.

With the decentralization of education, there will be a growing role for sponsorships which essentially represent a commercial agreement in which one of the parties (the sponsored party) obtains a financial support from the sponsor in return for brand advertising or higher visibility among its target groups. The potential flaws of this partnership refer to gaps in the legislative framework, various socio-economic factors, distrust and lack of initiative on both sides.

2. Parents’ involvement in preventing educational failure

Parents explain educational failure as a result of school limitations, while teachers find it is a consequence of parents’ lack of interest, but both school and family affect the child’s identity-shaping process.
Compared to other educational factors (e.g. school, media, workplace), family stands apart: it is the first to engage in the educational process and its influence is not limited to one period of time, it continues to a greater or lesser degree throughout one’s life, being the first organized setting known to child since birth.

A value judgment of any given family can be made easily, particularly if we look at its contribution to engaging children in educational and character building activities. Home provides the first opportunities for social relations, for emotional and verbal communication with those around us, and family activities represent the first model for stimulating child initiative for human action. When the child breaks away from his/her family to engage in activities conducted in other social environments, his/her parents, siblings and close relatives continue to exert a special influence and to play an important part in the child’s personal development. A parent’s educational intervention targets age as well as individual-related particularities which need to be understood and considered during the child’s and later on young man’s/woman’s personality development. Unfortunately, families don’t all show the same degree of commitment to supporting their children, their development, some families leave it all to school, convinced that schools are the only ones responsible for providing education. And not only education, of course. They see school as the only one certified to discipline a child. In a normal family environment, primary school pupils learn under the supervision, guidance, stimulation, support and control of their parents. The outcome of parents’ participation in this depends largely on how well they know their children and how involved they are in shaping their personality. A family can show certain individual traits that help or hinder the child’s learning process. Early on in life, some children reveal certain interests that stem mostly from the activities carried out in their spare time. Their parents become aware of these and encourage their children to pursue those interests that develop their positive features. A family’s social life can also be a
model of action that fills the pupil’s mind and heart and helps him/her establish adequate ties with those around him.

A family’s educational role does not cease once the child begins to attend school, it expands to support the pupil. Parents can help their primary school pupil to properly understand the need to participate in the learning experience that comes with ever more tasks and duties as the pupil advances from one school year to another. This way, families are there for their children as they make the transition from primary to secondary school.

3. The inefficiency of school deviance prevention programs

In „Preventing Delinquency“ (Cusson, 2006, pp. 95-100), the author reviews a few inefficient procedures of preventing violence in schools. Those procedures doomed to fail include: individual therapy or individual counseling – because delinquency remains unchanged after the intervention. Group therapies – it turns out they can be seriously harmful because it was proven that, if adolescents at risk talk about their problems, the number of those youth inclined towards acts of violence goes up rather than down. During 1963-1966, Reckless and his associates conducted a study in Ohio that consisted of randomly placing more than a thousand predelinquents either in a special class or in a regular class. The project intended to fight against the process of self-deprecation and stigmatization experienced by juvenile predelinquents by regrouping pupils in class and having teachers serve as role models using „non-stigmatizing” disciplinary measures. At the end of the study, no difference was noticed between the boys in the interventions and the ones who participated in the regular programs. Conferences and exposes on law abideance are also inefficient because the conferences held by police trainers with the intention of persuading pupils to resist delinquency or drug use-related peer pressure have registered disappointing results. The American DARE program consisting of 17
police officer-led classroom lessons on "how to say no to drugs" was not only a complete failure but as a result of it, those who had received the program went on to using more drugs than those who were in the control group.

The lure of authoritarianism – in Miami it was shown that pupils from schools which enforced an extreme discipline expressed their resentment by adopting a delinquent behavior.

Recreational activities – The programs intended to prevent delinquency through leisure time activities: sports, travel etc, start with the premise that pupils won’t engage in reckless acts if kept busy. Studies have shown, however, that it is better not to expect these programs to have a high rate of preventive effectiveness, especially since in 2001 Gottfredson found that recreational activities dissociated from a social skills-based education do not lead to reduced drug use (Cusson, 2006, apud Palaghia, 2009).

4. Positive outcomes of school deviance prevention

It has been proven that a school which is effective in education is effective also in the prevention of deviance. Debarbieux insisted on the cohesion of educational teams, on the idea that the school principal should mobilize school partners and every school staff member should get to know each pupil. School is capable of changing its pupils’ fate through effective schooling, where the school principal applies leadership to both school staff and pupils, teachers are demanding but stay real, monitor their pupils’ progress, encourage them to self-improve, maintain order and discipline in the classroom without resorting to punitive methods, parents are encouraged by the school team to participate in the educational project, and pupils have the opportunity to be responsible in class (Debarbieux, 2003, pp. 582-603).

Maurice Cusson describes the Positive Action through Holistic Education (PATHE) project as an American experimental action aimed at developing the school staff’s educational competencies to obtain
higher student school attachment and performance. What this project brought new to the table was that teachers were trained on how to manage a class and conduct an interactive education, the educational team examined the school regulation together with the pupils to determine and clarify crime punishment, teachers were shown what methods to use in order to allow pupils to learn at their own pace, a peer counseling network was created as well as job-seeking skills and career exploration programs, at-risk pupils received individual monitoring, and extracurricular activities were added. As a result, pupils reported less punishment, higher grades, they were less likely to repeat a grade and showed improved class behavior. In conclusion, effective schooling is „the result of strong leadership applied to a motivated and cohesive teaching team” (Cusson, 2006, pp. 95-100). It has been found that schools which register acts of violence also show a low desire to interfere and frequent deviation from the norms, often ignored by teachers. Debarbieux (2003) proposed to have a school regulation drafted by teams consisting of pupils, parents, teachers and school management. Once the regulation is approved, its violation should not be left unaddressed. Schools should have clear rules based on predictable sanctions, as well as consistent rewarding of good behavior. Left unsanctioned and unrestrained, deviance becomes commonplace.

A primary triad takes shape (Miftode, 2000, pp. 139-157) - school, home and proximate social environment - „in charge” with shaping the individual’s personality. It is necessary „to rule upon an interdisciplinary activity which, besides various professionals interested to participate (sociologists, social workers, legal advisers, anthropologists etc.), would also call upon those responsible for primary socialization (in the first stage) and for secondary socialization (in the second stage).” School provides the ideal environment for spotting aggressive and behaviorally-challenged pupils (Palaghia, 2009, p. 127). Cognitive-behavioral therapies are first when it comes to efficiency methods of fighting against delinquency. Situational prevention includes an
adequate supervision inside the school, even video surveillance if necessary, as well as an efficient information flow. Social or developmental prevention is one through which specialists are concerned with preventing the youth from living in an unstable educational climate and turning into socially-challenged adults. Specialists intervene in those families to help parents become better educators able to nurture the child’s self-control and social skills, while in schools they intervene among teachers and pupils with the same purpose. They have a direct approach on the subjects to make them acquire the social competency they lack.

Social prevention is the educational intervention upon the subject and his/her micro-environment which aims to reduce predisposition to delinquency. Social prevention aims to help build a child’s social life skills, focusing its action on the subject’s social setting. The role of social prevention is to stop the individual progress which might lead to social alienation and anti-social behavior. Developmental prevention, one specific to education, „targets behavioral disorders before they set in and covers cognitive gaps before the child starts to accumulate delays hard to make up for” (Cusson, 2006, p. 74).

Reinstating normal educational conditions that enable the child to achieve the normal mental, social and moral milestones is the primary goal of developmental prevention. The prevention aims and means include:

1. Developing parents’ educational competency;
2. Developing child’s social competency;
3. Cognitive-behavioral intervention focused on stimulating child cognitive development;
4. Joint family-school „operations”.

Developmental programs resort to cognitive-behavioral therapy/intervention which proved its effectiveness in preventing delinquency and even relapse. During the cognitive-behavioral intervention, behaviors are learned through observation and maintained through reinforcement. The therapist starts the intervention with an accurate identification of the
problem behaviors, their history, the mistaken convictions underlying clients’ behaviors, and aims to reduce anti-social behaviors and replace them with adjusted behaviors by using social reinforcements, shaping and enhancing self-confidence, relaxation, role play and other techniques. „Cognitive-behavioral approaches register significant results with action-oriented clients who feel the need to take practical action, with goal-oriented clients who want results and with those interested in changing a limited number of behaviors” (Gârleanu, 2002, p. 48).

5. The importance of agents of socialization in preventing school deviance and in teaching pupils about responsibility

Home/family is the first social environment in which individuals behave like human beings, it represents a homogeneous group, a fundamental framework where, as a result of socialization, the youth learn their first concepts of duty, responsibility, interdiction. Family agents of socialization have the role of stimulating a young person’s social integration and embracing of those norms, adequate behaviors and interdictions demanded by social order. Family performs the function of socialization in four specific contexts: through psychological communication, which contributes to the emotional development essential in providing a child with a moral and psychological balance; through moral education that shapes „a responsible behavior” and targets the relations of authority which the young person needs to respect; through cognitive teaching which allows the child to acquire a set of skills, abilities, and habits that are essential to social life; through creativity, ingenuity and resourcefulness which stimulate social participation and engagement.

Most sociological studies have underlined a tendency to reduce the family’s socialization function and reallocate it to other social institutions specialized in shaping the life and behavior of an individual. These entail a transition from an emotion-based type of education to an
instrumental one, meaning that the young individuals will show a diminished reproductive behavior compared to that of their parents, as well as a reduced role of affectivity. The weakened family cohesion is also a result of parents’ work-related physical and mental strains and of their long absence from their family because of the demanding working hours. Parents are entitled to a career that allows them to fulfill all their family functions and especially the economic one, but they often overlook the fact that they should leave a substitute in place to cover those functions they aren’t able to perform, otherwise the socialization and primary education function is reduced or altered. Children cannot develop safely and benefit from a primary education other than in the bosom of their family. Supervision is necessary more than in the first or second year of life. Parents often believe that if a child reaches school age, he/she is old enough to take care of himself/herself. Few parents are concerned with developing and maintaining the bond they have with their child, recalling their own childhood as a sufficient basis for development. For a child, the simple idea that he/she is being monitored, in a positive way, just to ensure that any of his/her needs are addressed, leads to an increased sense of security and self-control, as a result of the reduced vulnerability. By multiplying the instances of mental and social communication with our children, by providing a model of interfamily relations, parent to parent and parents to children, based on affection and mutual respect, we obtain the socialization and moral integration of adolescents who thus internalize the norms of a moral living and observe them with conviction. On the other hand, reality and family-life dysfunctions, such as tensions, lack of communication, indifference, alcoholism etc. lead to family dissolution. In such families, children pick up deviant attitudes as they mimic their own parents. In shaping a young person’s moral behavior, the degree to which educational control is exercised and the affectionate or hostile manner in which it is exercised are key educational factors. A well-balanced fulfillment of all family members’ functions and tasks results
in a normal family life, whereas a dysfunctional family lies at the root of
an individual’s deviance.

Family education is extremely important in the socialization process,
which is why parents should be mindful of their children’s personality
and of the educational approach they plan to undertake so that these
two match up. Parents should ensure that children gain self-confidence,
observe norms and rules, internalize cultural, moral, social and legal
values, but at the same time they should not destroy children’s
creativity, originality or resourcefulness. The child should have a clear
understanding as to why it is necessary to observe all rules and norms
imposed by parents and society at large.

If the family climate is defined by support and tolerance, respect as
well as penalty for unacceptable behavior, children have a high self-
esteeem. If the family shows tensions, major conflicts or too much
leniency, the self-esteem goes down. A child with low self-esteem is a
misfit, out of place in normal everyday activities, but composed,
persistent and focused in deviant actions. In the case of adolescents, the
way they perceive themselves as a result of their relations with their
family members will affect how behave outside their home, and the
more strenuous a family’s socialization role, the more harmful its
effects on children.

Positive socialization helps the young person integrate in society, in
the group he/she belongs to. If the family taught the young person what
values are accepted by society, the young person will abide by them
his/her whole life and will know to resist the outside negative pressure.
If not, there’s a chance the young person will associate with the wrong
people, with groups of peers whose socially-conflicting values and
norms he/she will also adopt. A transition from childhood to adulthood,
adolescence is marked by uncertainties, divided between seeking
independence, gaining independence and the real emotional and
material dependence on family. Family should support the young
person to gain independence and acquire his/her own identity, to
internalize the culture of the group he/she is a part of, and of the social,
moral and legal values and norms. Family’s best “ally” in achieving this purpose is school. This institution continues the socialization process and in some cases it only just begins it. When the family is unsuccessful in its socialization role, all hopes go particularly towards the school as one that conducts a systematic education of the youth.

School socialization leads to performance and acceptance of rules and motivates pupils into abiding by the school program and behavioral norms. School adjustment is about being integrated and accepted into the group of peers and obtaining academic performance. Academic success is an indicator of school adjustment, and the child enters a „cooperate-compete” relation with his/her peers. In their interaction with teachers, school staff and peers, pupils experience a continuous learning process that shapes their social identity. School social work benefits pupils, their families, school teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as some community members.

6. The role of school social workers in shaping pupil responsibility

School is regarded as key in today’s society. Its main role is that of educator, followed by that of provider of social services. It is through education that society is able to endure, by passing on to new generations the knowledge stored throughout centuries. Moreover, it enables the youth to reach their maximum potential by helping them know and accept themselves, internalize their ideals, become responsible and involved in the development of their society. School should support new generations to adjust to an ever changing reality. Young people need to be prepared for a future full of the unforeseen, and if they are in synch, creative and innovative, they can mould it to their liking.

While learning, pupils must develop their own competencies and find intellectual or practical rewards in the educational process. In school, pupils have to develop their personal and social autonomy
which will help them effectively integrate in a community. With time, parents began to participate more in their children’s school life, the teacher-pupil relation gained democratic grounds, and the socio-cultural inequities in the educational setting lessened. A school social worker’s main purpose comes second to education, and pupils are to develop their problem-solving skills, their capacity to become accountable for their own behavior and to adapt to change. School social work aims to identify the obstacles to learning and eliminate them, to the extent possible, as well as to ensure access for all to school education.

The school social worker will often be the only social worker in a school or an entire neighborhood. Therefore, the practitioner requires skills for all three levels of the practice: micro, mezzo, and macro. He/She works foremost with pupils, but can also develop and facilitate groups for pupils and parents. A social worker’s practice in school is about cooperation, counseling, developing behavioral plans and training others on how to work with difficult children. A school social worker has to ensure that pupils’ rights and obligations are observed, and that any form of abuse is prevented. It is also necessary to prevent pupils’ school maladjustment by identifying its root causes, by having a good rapport between the school social worker and the family social worker, towards an enhanced school-family relation. The school social worker must also ensure that the skills associated to social growth are formed.

The first school day is very important for child and family. The child becomes a pupil, the parent is replaced by an educator, and the informal setting is replaced by a formal one consisting of school rights and duties. School adjustment is a result of school socialization and is defined by pupils’ participation to the school objectives, such as academic performance, discipline, commitment to the schedule and behavior norms. School provides a formative experience for children. It may be a pleasant or unpleasant place, depending on each child’s personal experience. Peer interaction can be a source of enjoyment or
alienation. In time, parents’ participation to their children’s school life increased. The teacher-pupil relation gained democratic grounds and the socio-cultural inequities in the educational setting lessened. The school’s primary goal was to ensure school education access for all. A school social worker has the obligation, the role to ensure that pupils’ rights and obligations are observed, and that any form of abuse is prevented. The school social worker must use his/her skills, knowledge and values to improve pupils’ life. While focusing on their job, they must build relations, evaluate, work with the multidisciplinary team and help children and adolescents to communicate the problems that cause their academic failure.

The school social worker’s primary role in dealing with pupils may differ from one school to another and from one neighborhood to another, depending on the beneficiaries. He/She spends a great deal of time helping emotionally- and behaviorally-challenged children or those with special needs. Among the roles and duties of a school social worker, Linda Openshaw (2008) identifies four basic tasks common to all school social workers: consultation with others in the multidisciplinary team; assessment, applied to a variety of different roles in direct service, consultation and program development; direct intervention with children and parents in individual, group and family modalities; assistance with program development.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has identified important guidelines for the delivery of social work services in schools, including standards for practice, professional preparation and development, and administrative structure and support. These guidelines are set forth in the NASW Standards for School Social Work Services, adopted in 1978 and revised in 1992 and again in 2002. Each school social worker should be aware of and apply these standards in their practice.

Children take their family for what it is and may grow up mirroring the behavior of their significant family members. School socialization leaves fewer marks than family socialization which can be more
restrictive, „the child becoming a prisoner of the world defined by his/her parents” (Neamțu 2003, p. 834). Through school socialization, pupils achieve academic performance, learn to abide by rules and have a positive motivation for observing school schedule and behavioral norms. School adjustment is about being integrated and accepted into the group of peers and obtaining academic performance. Academic success is an indicator of school adjustment, and the child enters a „cooperate-compete” relation with his/her peers. In their interaction with teachers, school staff and peers, pupils experience a continuous learning process that shapes their social identity. School social work benefits pupils, their families, school teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as some community members.

The functions of a school social worker were first outlined in 1977 when social work practice was legally introduced in US schools (Costin 1995, apud. Neamțu 2003). They include the following: to prepare the pupils’ social and/or developmental case history, to conduct individual or group counseling with pupils and their parents, to help at risk pupils with school adjustment and also monitor how they adapt to the home and community environments, not only to the school one. The school social worker should also identify school and/or community-based resources to meet school goals and provide social services to pupils and their families, to the teaching and non-teaching school staff and to community members. A school social worker’s task is to prevent school maladjustment. This can be done if teachers and other school staff observe pupils’ behavior in class, breaks, or extra curricular activities. Parents and teachers who work closely with pupils can notice certain signs of school maladjustment. Thus, if parents notice their child neglects school duties, lies about his/her academic performance, his/her school tasks and activities, or about any school-related problems and conflict situations he/she encountered, they can tell it could be school maladjustment they’re dealing with. Teachers can diagnose school maladjustment very early on if they notice the pupil reads with difficulty, as if trying to decipher the text, mistakes certain
letters for others, omits words or switches word order, writes illegibly, makes spelling mistakes, has trouble with phrasing and summarizing, can’t see the logical connections between ideas and is hugely computation-challenged. All these warning signs indicate that the causes of school maladjustment may be found at home, because family fails to stimulate the child’s intellectual abilities and mental development, or because the child is faced with some form of domestic abuse (physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse), or because at home, education is underrated, or because the family struggles with access to educational resources.

As a basis for his/her intervention program, the school social worker has to assess the particulars of the home/source environment. School maladjustment may occur as early as the primary school stage, but also in the later school stages. For the young children, the causes can be traced back to their home climate, whereas for older children, the causes can be found both at home and in school. The causes can include: parents splitting up, an inflexible teacher, a chronic condition, domestic violence, an accident, parents’ alcoholism. Pupils labeled „stupid”, „incapable”, etc., can easily become misfits. In turn, they will label their peers who succeed in school as being „nerds”, „bores”, they may look to compare themselves to others on the basis of social criteria that differ from the school specific ones, and they will form separate informal groups. They may resort to drugs, cutting classes or dropping out, or quite the opposite, they may become determined to reach a high academic performance.

Such pupils need to receive the support of school social workers who will assist those pupils they’ve assessed early on as being at risk of maladjustment before they internalize the role of «misfit» or «deviant». The social worker establishes a friendly relation with the pupils, provides emotional support, guiding and motivating the pupils towards school readjustment. The counseling program is based on gaining the pupil’s trust and emotional acceptance and assessing the pupil’s needs. Parents also have to receive support to improve their educational
practices, they need to be stimulated to take part in their children’s school life and develop the skills required to mitigate parent-child or parent-teacher conflicts, they need to develop efficient ways to cope with stress without affecting their relation with the child, and for those parents with reduced financial means, they also need to find and mobilize additional resources. In the case of pupils, their needs include: to develop their self-esteem, enhance intellectual abilities, learn conflict-resolution methods, develop social interaction skills. Pupils should come to understand their parents’ educational demands and practices, to learn to control the way they express their feelings, etc. Since parents have a vested interest in their children’s progress, they need to be involved in a „school-community partnership” (Agabrian, 2005) which would allow them to jointly choose the best educational options for their child and to share the responsibility for the child’s progress with the school. At central level, the National Council for Preventing and Fighting against Violence[1] in Schools was established, whose primary role is to act as a national anti-violence Observatory which will monitor and evaluate how the national strategy for fighting against violence in schools is being enforced nationwide. In addition, the Council will be responsible with drafting and validating the methodologies for collecting data on school violence (indicators, data collection procedures, etc.), and with monitoring the school violence phenomenon by coordinating the regular data collection on school violence at district and local level. Other responsibilities of the recently established Council include initiating consultations with various governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions with regard to violence in the educational system, proposing and establishing forms of intra- and inter-institutional cooperation with a view to prevent and fight against violence in schools, developing national programs and campaigns for preventing and fighting against

violence in schools, and preparing an annual national report on violence in schools, based on the given set of indicators.

To achieve the objectives set forth in the national strategy and operationalized through the action plans, the National Council for Preventing and Fighting against Violence in Schools initiates and manages inter-institutional consultancy or cooperation relations with governmental or non-governmental institutions such as: The Ministry of Administration and Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the National Authority for Protecting the Child’s Rights, the National Audiovisual Council, the Ministry of Culture and National Patrimony, nationally-representative NGOs active in preventing and fighting against violence.

References


15. Minister's Order no. 4390/7.06. (2012) regarding the establishment of the National Council for Preventing and Fighting against Violence in Schools.


