

Effective Parent Communication

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Effective Communication

- One of the most beneficial aspects of teaching is building positive relationships with parents.
- Effective parent-teacher communication is essential for a teacher to be successful.
- A good relationship between parents and a teacher is invaluable towards maximizing the time that the teacher has with that student.

Constant Communication

- A student who knows that the teacher communicates on a regular basis with their parents and who knows that their parents trust the teacher will likely put more effort into school.
- Likewise, a student who knows that the teacher rarely or never communicates with their parents and/or their parents do not trust the teacher will often pit the two against each other.
- That is counterproductive and will create problems for the teacher and ultimately issues for the student as well.

Building Relationships

- Many teachers underestimate the value of building relationships with their students' parents.
- Parents can be your best friends, and they can be your worst enemy. It is hard work for a teacher to build trusting cooperative relationships, but it will be well worth all the effort in the long run.
- The following five tips can help teachers build solid relationships with the parents of the students they serve.

Building Trust

- Building a parent's trust is often a gradual process.
- First of all, parents need to ensure that you have their child's best interest at heart. Proving this to some parents can be challenging, but it isn't impossible.
- The first step to building their trust is simply letting them know you on a more personal level.

Building Trust

- There are obviously personal details that you don't want to give to parents, but don't be afraid to talk casually with them about hobbies or interest outside of school.
- If a parent has a similar interest, then milk that for all its worth. If a parent can relate to you, then the communication and trust between you will likely be solid.

Building Trust

- Don't be afraid to go the extra mile to help a student. This can win trust and respect faster than anything.
- Something as simple as a personal call to check on a student who has missed a few days due to illness will stand out in a parent's mind. Opportunities like this present themselves from time to time.
- Don't waste those opportunities.

Building Trust

- Finally, allow them to see you're a terrific teacher with their child's best interest in mind.
- Demand respect from your students and push them to succeed, but be flexible, understanding, and caring in the process.
- Parents who care about education will trust you if they see these things.

Listen to Them

- There may be times that a parent has a question or concern about something.
- The worst thing you can do in this case is to be defensive.
- Being defensive makes it seem as though you have something to hide.
- Instead of being defensive listen to everything they have to say before you react. If they have a valid concern, assure them that you will take care of it.

Listen to Them

- If you made a mistake, admit it, apologize for it, and tell them how you plan to remedy it.
- Most of the time a parent's questions or concerns come down to miscommunication or misconceptions.
- Don't be afraid to clear up any issues, but do so in a tone that is calm and in a manner which is professional.
- Listening to them is just as powerful as explaining your side.
- You will find more times than not that the frustration is not with you, but instead with their child and that they simply need to vent.

Communicate Often

- Effective communication can be time-consuming, but it is crucial.
- There are many ways to communicate these days.
- Notes, newsletters, daily folders, phone calls, emails, visitations, open room nights, class web pages, postcards, and parent-teacher conferences are some of the most popular means in which to communicate.
- An effective teacher will likely use several means over the course of the year.
- Good teachers communicate frequently.

Communicate Often

- If a parent hears it from you, there is a lesser chance of something getting misinterpreted in the process.
- An important thing to note is that most parents get sick of only hearing unpleasant news about their child.
- Pick three to four students per week and contact their parents with something positive.
- Try not to include anything negative in these types of communications.
- When you do have to contact a parent for something negative like a discipline issue, try to end the conversation on a positive note.

Utilize Technology

- To help open the lines of communication, keep parents involved in everything their child is doing in school.
- Keep them informed about school events, classroom procedures, educational strategies, assignment dates, behavior, academic progress, or anything school related.

Utilize Technology

- Utilize Technology — Technology is a great way to keep parents informed because it allows you to get information out quickly.
- With a class website you can post assignments, project due dates, events, extended learning opportunities, and explain what educational strategies you are using in the classroom.
- Providing your email is another quick way to communicate any information about your students progress or behavior issues.

Parent Conferences

- Parent Conferences — Face-to-face contact is the best way to communicate with parents and a lot of teachers choose this option as their main way to communicate.
- It's important to be flexible when scheduling conferences because some parents can only attend before or after school.
- During the conference it's important to discuss academic progress and goals, what the student needs work on, and any concerns the parent has with their child or the education that they are being provided with.

Open House

- Open House — Open house or "Back to School Night" is another way to keep parents informed and make them feel welcome.
- Provide each parent with a packet of essential information they will need throughout the school year.
- Within the packet you can include: contact information, school or class website information, educational objectives for the year, classroom rules, etc.
- This is also a great time to encourage parents to become classroom volunteers, and share information about parent-teacher organizations that they can participate in.

Progress Reports

- Progress Reports — Progress reports can be sent home weekly, monthly or a few times a year.
- This way of connecting gives parents tangible evidence of their child's academic progress.
- It's best to include your contact information in the progress report, just in case parents have any questions or comments about their child's progress.

Monthly Newsletter

- Monthly Newsletter — A newsletter is a simple way to keep parents informed with important information.
- Within in the newsletter you can include: monthly goals, school events, assignment due dates, extension activities, volunteer opportunities, etc.

Document Every Communication

- The importance of documenting cannot be underscored. It doesn't have to be anything in depth. It needs to include the date, parent/student name, and a brief summary.
- You may never need it, but if you do, it will be well worth the time.
- No matter how strong of a teacher you are, you will not always make everyone happy. Documenting is invaluable.

Document Every Communication

- For example, a parent may not be happy about a decision you have made to retain their child.
- This is a process that often spans the course of the year.
- A parent could claim that you never talked to them about it, but if you have it documented that you did four times throughout the year, the parent has no basis for their claim.

Fake it When Necessary

- The reality is that you are not always going to get along or like every parent of every child that you teach.
- There will be personality conflicts, and sometimes you just don't have any similar interest.
- However, you have a job to do and avoiding a parent is ultimately not what is best for that child.

Fake it When Necessary

- Sometimes you will have to grin and bear it.
- While you may not like being fake, building some sort of positive relationship with their parent will be beneficial to the student.
- If you try hard enough, you can find some kind of common ground with just about anyone.
- If it benefits the student, you must be willing to go the extra mile even it is uncomfortable at times.