

Effective Parent/Teacher Communication Tips for Teachers

When teachers and parents dialogue together, "effective dialogue develops out of a growing trust, a mutuality of concern, and an appreciation of contrasting perspectives" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004).

Communication Tools:

- * Newsletters
- * School-to-home notebooks
- * Daily home notes or communication books
- * Progress reports
- * Report Cards
- * Email messages
- * "Good News" phone calls
- * Parent/Teacher Conferences
- * School Websites
- * Teacher Checklist on Communication
- * Parent Checklist on Communication

1. **Stay Positive -**

Be encouraging and positive when you communicate with parents. Use appropriate language and non-threatening tones. Every positive interchange will increase trust and build a stronger relationship.

2. **Use Familiar Language -**

Be careful with educational jargon. If technical terms or acronyms must be used, then carefully explain the meaning. All written communication should use simple, familiar language with short sentences. Be direct and communicate with respect and appreciation for parents and families. Be sensitive to cultural differences and, if possible, have written communication translated to the families' first language.

3. **Personalize Communication -**

Contact parents by phone or email often. A more collaborative interaction is established, when calls and emails are kept positive and brief, and messages are left as needed. Use "good news" calls and emails to recognize a child for good behavior and progress. Emails, class newsletters, and web pages can inform parents of daily activities, homework assignments, announcements, etc.

4. **Keep a Contact Log -**

Always keep notes and records of your communication with the parent in a file.

5. **Address Problems and Concerns -**

Parents will be more supportive if you contact them as soon as a problem begins. Try to set up a meeting with the parent to discuss concerns privately. Stay professional and do not become defensive. Have your data available. Discuss what you observe in class, assignments, tests scores, homework, etc. Include both the student's strengths and weaknesses in your conversation. Remind the parents that you do care about their child's success. Carefully listen to parent input and afford time to summarize the discussion and make a plan of action.

References

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