



This Issue

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH PARENTS

Every teacher and administrator knows that one of the greatest rewards and one of the biggest challenges can be working effectively with parents of students. Parents and the school need to develop a partnership that works in the best interest of students.

Unfortunately there are times when relationships with parents can be guarded at best and adversarial at worst. In the best interest of the children, it is imperative that schools and parents work together for the success of each and every child.

This entire issue of *The Red Apple* takes a look at working effectively with parents and gives practical tips for ensuring that you have the **best teaching year** you've ever had.

Tips For Solid Parent Communication

- Establish planned positive communications with parents.
- Communicate expectations for your class to parents in the beginning.
- Call parents of potentially troubled students before a situation arises to express your desire to help the child have a successful time in your class.
- Home visits on potentially difficult students can be a real eye opener and worth the time and effort.
- Ask the parent what has worked with their child in the past.
- Send home notes or cards weekly – a good rule of thumb is two positive notes per class per week.
 - Phone call after a particularly good day.
 - Return a parent's call as soon as possible.
 - Call at the first sign of a problem
 - Document behaviors and present factual information.
 - Have the answers and a plan to deal with the misbehaviors.
 - Be the ultimate professional.

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FACTS About Parents And Kids

- FACT** 95% of parents are illogical when it comes to their kids.
- FACT** 86% of parents have never received a positive phone call from the school.
- FACT** School age children spend 8,670 hours at home each school year.
- FACT** School age children spend 1,087 hours at school during an average school year.
- FACT** You have a right to parental support.

Also In This Issue:

- **Conducting Successful Parent Conferences**
- **Getting Commitment from Parents**
- **Disarming Parent Criticism**

Conducting Successful Parent-Teacher Conferences

Set up your conference area in the coziest place possible – avoid having a desk between you and the parent.

Have an agenda and a time frame.

Be prepared with information that includes strengths and weaknesses of the child.

Have positive student work for EACH student on display in the classroom – parents look for this!

Listen 60% – Talk 40%.

Avoid comparing siblings.

Watch your body language.

Never assume that the person attending the conference is the mother, grandmother, sister, etc.

If you must discuss problem areas, emphasize the positive first.

Never talk about another person's child.

If you have a discipline system that includes the listing of names on the chalkboard, erase those during conference times.

Encourage parents to keep lines of communication open with you and provide a structure for doing so (e.g. "you can reach me after 3:00 on Monday and Thursday or by e-mail anytime).

Never become confrontational with a parent.

Remember that teachers' lounges have BIG ears! Don't discuss your parent conferences in front of staff. You'll be destroying the confidentiality of the conference and this will get back to parents in ways you won't expect.

The Parent Relations Rulebook

Rule 1: Treat students the way you would want your own child, niece, nephew, etc., to be treated.

Rule 2: Acknowledge and reinforce positive behavior.

Rule 3: Document misbehavior.

Rule 4: Deal with the misbehavior at the first sign of a problem (that is the second time the misbehavior occurs!)

Rule 5: Express caring, concern and professionalism in every interaction with parents.



Disarming Criticism From Parents

If the criticism is justified:

ADMIT IT!

AND

APOLOGIZE!

If the criticism is wrong or only partially correct:

LISTEN!

Don't be defensive.

Ask for more information for clarification as needed.

Refocus the conversation.

If the parent remains angry, relate that conflict can harm the child.

If the parent is still upset, suggest a meeting with the principal.

THE Parent-Teacher PROBLEM BEHAVIOR CONFERENCE

1

Meet without the student initially

2

Describe the situation to the parent

3

Provide documentation

4

Describe what has been done to remedy the situation

5

Ask the parent for any clarifying information

6

Develop a school-home plan to extinguish the behavior

7

Invite the student in to the conference to explain the plan

8

Demonstrate a united front

9

Make a follow up phone call to parent

10

Revise the plan as necessary