

Engaging Parents in a Collaborative Relationship

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Overview

- Effective ways to begin the relationship
- Maintaining the relationship
- Record-keeping strategies
- Sharing sensitive information
- At what point can you be direct and honest?
- 6 types of engagement – Dr. Joyce Epstein
- Parenting Challenges
- Challenge Go Round Activity

Think About.....

- Due to cultural beliefs related to the authoritative position of the teacher or memories of their own school experiences or being unsure how to express their concerns to teachers, some parents may be reluctant to develop a relationship with their child's teacher. A few parents may fear questions or criticisms will put their child at a disadvantage at school.

Cultural Context for Relationships

- Teachers and parents know the child in different contexts
- They may have distinct but disparate perspectives on the same issue
- Fundamental part of parenting role is to be their child's advocate with the teacher and school
- Parents may be surprised to know that some teachers may be equally anxious about developing relationships with parents – especially new teachers – very little training in this area

Principles of Avoiding Conflicts

- Let parents know how and when they can contact the school and teacher
- Practice an open-door, open-minded policy
- Elicit expression of parents' concerns & interests in preparation for parent-teacher conferences
- Involve parents in classroom activities
- Know your school's strategy for discussing disagreements
- Confidentiality is key in these conversations

Beginning the Relationship

- Before the school year begins – send a letter or postcard that welcomes the student and parents to the class or a brief phone call
- Send home a brief handbook outlining essential information about the class, how it is run, basic school rules re attendance and behaviour, celebrations, ways of contacting you, class website, short questionnaire about child's interests, parents' hopes and expectations for the year
- Open house at beginning of year

Maintaining the Relationship

- Share ideas with parents about ways to volunteer in their child's schooling
- Offer suggestions for volunteering outside of school hours
- Regular newsletters emailed to parents
- Phone calls that recognize the good things the child has done – builds a caring relationship – sunshine calls

Record Keeping Strategies

- Keep a phone log of date and essence of conversation – who called whom, when, for what reason, any changes needing to be made, when to report back etc.
- After parent/teacher interviews, make some quick notes about information family shared
- Daily communication book for some students
- Document document document

Sharing Sensitive Information

- Must always be diplomatic and tactful because parents tend to believe their child first
- Always respond quickly to the parent and only after you have done some background checking about the situation – you may only be able to say that you need more information and will get back to them in 2 hours.
- Strongly suggest that you do not use the phone for problem solving – face to face is better

Being Direct and Honest

- Speak with a smile on your face – reduces the stress
- Do not use “but” in your conversation
- Depending on the age of the child, have the child explain the situation on the phone to the parent with you present
- Must be a level of tact and dignity attached to honesty as honesty is not always what some parents want to hear
- Be succinct with your comments – don’t go off topic and ramble

Successful Parent-Teacher Conferences: Do's

- Give parents plenty of notice
- Start and end the conference on a positive note
- Be organized
- Listen actively
- Have samples of student work to back up your point
- Give parents homework

Don'ts

- Don't stray from the topic at hand – keep the meeting on track
- Don't get emotional – stay professional and objective
- Don't run late – respecting parents time is important
- Don't have a messy classroom
- Don't overwhelm parents with too many at-home tasks

Levels of Communication with Parents

- Inform*** → Parents are made aware of ways they can be involved in their child's school, information only
- Consult*** → Parents provide and influence decisions related to problem solving re their child's progress
- Engage*** → Parents are engaged in implementing same strategies at home and shared reporting
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Framework of Six Types of Involvement



THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL-FAMILY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

EPSTEIN'S SIX TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT



Type 1

PARENTING: Assist families in understanding child and adolescent development, and in setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.



Type 2

COMMUNICATING: Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.



Type 3

VOLUNTEERING: Improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at school or in other locations to support students and school programs.



Type 4

LEARNING AT HOME: Involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework, other curriculum-related activities, and individual course and program decisions.



Type 5

DECISION MAKING: Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through, school councils, committees, action teams, and other parent organizations



Type 6

COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY: Coordinate resources and services for students, families, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community.



PARENTING

Basic Responsibilities of Families

- ✓ Housing, health, nutrition, clothing, safety
- ✓ Understand child and adolescent development and parenting skills for all age levels
- ✓ Home conditions that support children as students at all grade levels
- ✓ Information and activities to help schools understand children and families



Challenges

PARENTING



- ✓ Provide information to *all* families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who attend workshops or meetings at the school building.
- ✓ Enable families to share information with schools about their backgrounds, cultures, children's talents, goals, and needs.

Redefinitions

A “workshop” is not only a *meeting* on a topic at the school building, but also the *content* of the meeting to be viewed, heard, or read at convenient times and varied locations by those who could not attend.



SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP TEAM
(students, parents, staff)
COLLABORATE TO DEVELOP

School Improvement Plans

Numeracy

**PRACTICES
from SIX TYPES
to meet this goal**

Literacy

**PRACTICES
from SIX TYPES
to meet this goal**

Safety and
Wellbeing

**PRACTICES
from SIX TYPES
to meet this goal**

Pathways/Student
Success

**PRACTICES
from SIX TYPES
to meet this goal**

Student Achievement

ACTIVITY

CHALLENGE-GO-ROUND



1. List ONE important challenge that your school must solve to engage your parent community.
2. At the signal, move to the next challenge and suggest possible solutions to the challenge.
3. Return to your group's challenge. Circle one solution that you think might work well. Be ready to discuss.



Video Clips

- Four common complaints by parents:
- Too much homework
- Not informed about child's progress
- Complaints about child's report card
- Teacher verbally abusing their child
- http://www.priceless-teaching-strategies.com/parent_complaints.html

Final thought.....

Remember that it is
about the child not you
or the parent!