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ASD Tips

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Teacher and Parent Relationship

“A child’s success is enhanced when teachers and parents are partners”

There are two important reasons that teachers must see parents as a number one resource in the child’s education:

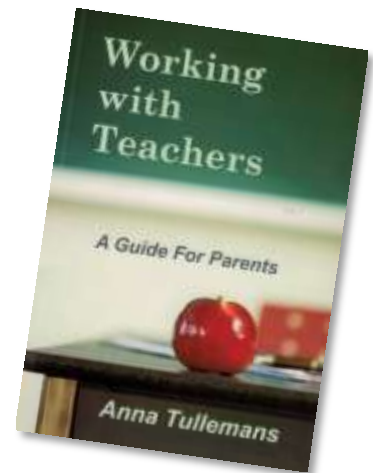
- Parents can provide a lot of information about the child
- When parents and teachers are partners they provide a united front

In other words, when a partnership is formed between teachers and parents, the students see the value in education and education related activities such as homework and revision.

Build collaboration

To begin this collaboration gather information about the student on an A4 page. Ask parents to fill out some basic information such as:

- Name of the student
- Siblings
- Extended family details (if appropriate)
- Childs accomplishments outside of school (if any)
- Hobbies/favourite activities
- Any strengths or challenges they see in their child
- Ask for preferred contact details
- How they may be able to help their child at home with learning



You can also ask the parent/guardian how they may want to participate in the classroom; what is their expertise that they may like to share in a classroom.

This one form can help you:

- Get to know more about the student
- Shows parents you are interested in the well-being of their child
- Shows respect for the parent/guardian as the main care giver

Research has shown that there are four benefits of a good teacher/parent relationship:



- Increased academic achievement
- Increased motivation for learning
- Increased attendance
- More positive attitude to learning and completing homework

Parents benefit through:

- Increase in ideas on how to support their child at home and at school in a learning environment
- Develop a greater appreciation for their own and the teachers role in the education experience

Teacher benefits through:

- More parental involvement, which in turn gives more time in the classroom
- More understanding of the student's home life and pressures
- Parents have a more positive view of teachers and their role

Communication

Effective communication between teacher and parent is highly valuable in the school environment. Good communication promotes a healthy and productive environment in which to create learning and learning opportunities for both parents and students.

5 strategies to improve communication

1. Communication Initiation:
 - a. Start communication early in the year before any incidents have occurred
2. Communication Timeliness
 - a. Contact parents soon after an incident. If you wait too long it can create frustration (seen as nothing being done) or uneasiness (what are you trying to hide from me)
3. Communication that is consistent and frequent
 - a. Contact each parent at least once per term. Schedule it into your diary so you don't miss any parents.
4. Communication that is followed through
 - a. Remember to always follow through on what you say you are going to do
5. Communication that has clarity and usefulness of information
 - a. Always use language that makes sense and is easily understood.
 - b. If you need to use jargon explain the words that you use.

In these modern times more parents work outside the home and therefore teachers need to use a variety of communication strategies to be able to capture moments to make that communication possible. You will need to find the most effective form of communication from each individual parent/carer. These will vary but may include a range from:

- Email/phone call (personal contact is usually the most effective)



- Parent interview (although the word 'interview' sometimes has a negative connotation)
- Individual or group notices
- Newsletters
- School websites

Remember to use communication that can be focused on fathers/grandparents and guardians as well the mum of the family.

When using the telephone call as the primary means of communication be prepared with information to convey to the parent. In your call:

- Give reasons for calling
- Use positive comments and language
- Always finish with 'how appreciative' you are of the time the parent has given to you to work through any issue you are having with the student.

12 Strategies to promote good teacher and parent relationships

1. Always smile
 - a. When greeting in the morning or afternoon, a warm smile will always be welcome from both sides
2. Declare your intention
 - a. Tell parents you are looking forward to a positive collaboration
 - b. Write an open letter to parents and give them some details about yourself and your classroom
 - c. A little about yourself
 - d. Important phone numbers
 - e. Best times to contact you
 - f. Any important procedures for your classroom
 - g. Any expectations
3. Contact parents with good news regularly
 - a. The only contact some parents have is when the student is in trouble or not performing well. Try to find something positive at least once per term to chat about.
 - b. Schedule this 'good news' phone call into your daily planner, that way NO student is accidentally missed
4. Give information on your classroom
 - a. Create an information sheet about your classroom Include hints and information about:
 - i. How to help with homework
 1. Reading: ask prediction questions
 2. Ask how 'how did you get the answer?'
 - ii. Give suggestions for reinforcing learning at home
 - iii. How parents can create a positive attitude to the classroom
 - iv. List how you can help the parent



- v. Give a list of books that you may be using in your classroom: parents have the opportunity to discuss these with the student
 - b. Once you have developed this resource you can use it the following year with minor changes
- 5. Use technology
 - a. Most parents are 'connected' somehow. This may be an easy way to promote communication
- 6. Use an open door policy, within limits
 - a. Early on in the year establish with parents when is the best time to chat and which days are better for you
- 7. Intervene early
 - a. Ensure you work with parents early when behaviour, homework, attendance or other issues appear. "Don't wait 'til it's too late" – some parents may have early intervention strategies or you can work together before these issues become very large and harder to deal with
- 8. Language is powerful
 - a. Choose your words well. When positive language is used parents are more likely to follow through with ideas and suggestions eg. I can see that Emily really has improved her reading since you have started reading with her
- 9. Smile at the student
 - a. When speaking with parents remember to 'smile at the child'. This shows you like their child. Try to complement the student in front of the parent. It will encourage both the parent and the student
- 10. Be a resource broker
 - a. Help parents find resources which may be of help. Some parents may not be able to afford particular books or the services of particular professionals, so try to have a variety of ideas (websites etc)
 - b. This is always an invaluable tool to parents who may feel they are not capable of helping their child through their own lack of education
- 11. Thank parents
 - a. Try to thank parents for their input regarding their child or their volunteering or reading help. Do this through
 - i. Individual letters/notices
 - ii. Group notices
 - iii. Newsletters etc
- 12. Really listen to parents
 - a. Try your active listening skills with parents. Tell them you hear their concerns. Explain to them why it's possible or not possible to take on board their suggestions

When you have implemented a range of strategies you may find that your parent – teacher relationship may improve and even blossom even with parents who may be more difficult to work with.

