



How To Deal With Parents: Communication

by Dr. Arlene Kaiser

Communicate! Haven't you heard this before? But who has time to communicate in the busy and demanding life of a teacher? Grading papers, attending meetings, professionally growing through classes or seminars, coordinating school projects, planning lessons, and taking care of their own families are only a few tasks assigned to teachers. Here is a suggestion that pays unbelievable dividends in parental support, respect and appreciation.

Take time to talk to every parent! During the first month of school, I telephoned every parent of my 150 students. A daunting task, but this activity took only six hours over four weeks and careful planning made it manageable.

For a homework grade, each student took a letter home, which stated that I would be calling at one of three times to be selected by the parent. I briefly called each parent to simply say hello and introduce myself. Even if I wanted to bring up something negative that had already happened, I didn't. The purpose of this phone call was to open the lines of communication and form a partnership with each parent.

Out of 150 students, only six students didn't return their letters. As I was committed to making contact with every parent, I explained to the student that I would be calling or visiting their parents at their work or home if I didn't receive their signed letter. Surprisingly all letters were quickly returned.

After four weeks the objective had been met: all parents were contacted. An added bonus in the telephone conversation was that parents offered to help in the classroom; others stated that they had never received such a positive phone call and most reassured me that I had their support throughout the year. The partnership of parent and teacher had been established.

Because the first communication had been so positive, I could now fearlessly contact the parents whenever I had a concern. It should not be surprising that an added benefit was the reduction of discipline problems. The investment of six hours in direct communication with parents paid huge dividends throughout the year.

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