

## Are Parents Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?

### Foundations of a Successful Parent /Teacher Conference

It is time to get together to discuss your child's progress, development.....

Hopefully this will not be the first time you have communicated with the parent.

Ways to make Parents Comfortable:

Adult size chairs, position of desk/chair, no telephones, manner of dress, sit around table or no table, coffee/water....

Teacher needs to:

Accept responsibility to plan and prepare for the conference by organizing information about the child.

Reassuring parent child really is learning something

Tells the parent that you know the child as being unique, unlike any other child.

1. Recognize that each parent is an individual with his own needs, attitudes, values, and beliefs.
2. Accept and respect each person as a person, even though his beliefs are different from yours.
3. Know the child well in order to share with the parents specific goals for the child.
4. Ask the parents for the goals for their child.
5. Prepare a portfolio of the child's progress in the classroom. (Art, work samples, interviews, checklists, photographs of projects, tape recordings of the child reading, anecdotal records, and etc.) This portfolio will be used as the basis for discussion between the teacher and parent as they review concrete examples of the child's work.
6. Accept the contributions of the parent and listen to all of their comments.
7. Listen to find out the reason that parent feels or thinks as he does about the child and reaction to the school.
8. Listen to feelings as well as words. The way a teacher responds to these concerns may be crucial to develop further trust in parent/teacher relationships.
9. Reflect parent's feelings and use active listening.
10. Avoid giving advice but if suggestions are given, offer more than one option – leave a way out without loss of failure.
11. Avoid letting parents go away feeling guilty, ashamed or hopeless.

Outcomes/Benefits

Child is more secure because of the cooperation between parents and adults in school.

Adults in school gain better understanding and insight into the child and his family.

Thank you for sharing one year of your child's life with me.

Let's talk again in a couple of weeks.

Concerns:

Finding the time

Really do not enjoy talking to some parents.

May become an inquisition.

No training.

Does not want to hear any suggestions, which might threaten or question my knowledge or competency.

Quick to blame parents.

Interesting to reverse roles – Consider the impression the parent may get from the teacher.

Suggestions for teachers:

Start and end the conference with something positive so the parents can concentrate on child's strengths.

Be honest and truthful. Be aware of personal feelings and facial expressions and reactions.

Be sure parents understand what you say. Use language parent understands.

Let parents talk about whatever they wish, things that are bothering them and avoid taking sides.

Parents do most of the talking.

Assume the role of the listener.

Assume the role of the facilitator.

Be objective and state facts.

Gives clues as to the place the child has in the family:

Parent describes child - positive terms or emphasizes his problems.

Recounts his behavior in detail or vaguely.

Sees has as resembling himself or some member of the family or as somebody rather unique.

Concentrates his conversation on the child or focuses more on a sibling.

Reveals whether child is living up to parent's expectations.

So are parents part of the problem or part of the solution?

Are teachers part of the problem or part of the solution?

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