

STRATEGIES TO FOSTER POSITIVE PARENTAL INTERACTIONS

Today's school staff members experience a diversity of parenting scenarios: involved parents, disinterested parents, single parents, working parents and relatives serving as the primary guardians. To improve and achieve the educational outcomes desired by schools and parents, an effective partnership between the two parties is necessary. School staff should see parents as a resource and apply intentional strategies to build positive relationships that will lead to success for all involved.

Make the First Move. Today's parents are often confused by what their role is in their child's educational experience. They want to be involved, but don't want to be seen as a "helicopter parent." They feel an ownership in their child's success, but respect the role of the teacher in constructing the learning process. Help parents understand that you see their role as supporting their child's education and consistently affirm their contributions and involvement.

Use Your Technological Resources. Set up a website or online newsletter that provides updated, accessible information for parents. This strategy is mutually beneficial as it serves as a communication vehicle for parents and advocates parental support of your endeavors with their child.

Train the Trainers. Communicate with all parents what your goals and expectations are for their child's educational experience during their time with you. Give them ideas on how they can support your efforts from home.

Dedicate Time for Parental Interactions. Identify, and post, blocks of time during your workday or week that you are available to give your full attention to parental matters.

Invite Parents into Your Space. You have nothing to hide, so open your door to parents and allow them to observe their child's school life. Parents will see their child in action and subsequently, you may land some volunteers that will support your work.

Outreach. There are benefits to reaching out and intentionally connecting with parents. Consider a weekly newsletter, home visits, email or even a phone call to introduce yourself, ask for assistance or share good news about a student's performance. In addition, providing educational resources to facilitate continued learning outside of school helps parents reinforce expectations and progress at home.

Donations. Not all parent's schedules afford them the flexibility to volunteer their time. However, they may want to contribute something to their child's educational experience. Consider posting items that could be easily donated such as: paper, old magazines, scrap material, school supplies, etc. If you are looking for guest speakers or field trip ideas, consider parents as great resources.

When Implementing Strategies, Be Aware That:

- ▲ Not all families have a home computer or easy access to a computer.
- ▲ You will not know all the answers to parents' questions, but you can commit to finding them out.
- ▲ Not all parents work first shift.
- ▲ Children do not tell their parents everything that is going on.
- ▲ Not all parents use English as their first language.
- ▲ If you ask for help, most parents will be happy to oblige.