

Getting Parents on Your Side

by Ferrell Yeokum
Discipline Matters

Research confirms that parental involvement is critical to student success. Teachers know that parents who take an active interest in their child's education are more likely to raise a successful student.

There are 3 keys for dealing with parents:

1. Communicate
2. Communicate
3. Communicate

Teachers know that establishing a relationship with parents through communication can yield great benefits but few do it regularly and well. The majority of teachers only make the negative calls. Ineffective teachers do not make much effort at all. They find the job too daunting because the phone might be disconnected or the response from the parents is sometimes negative. Sure, some parents are difficult to reach but most can be contacted. The point is, quit making excuses and make the effort!

One way to get parents on your side is to call early in the school year to make the "business call". Phone the parents of any student you believe might be a potential problem or at the first sign of difficulty (academics or behavior). Then, don't say anything negative. Just introduce yourself and tell them something neutral such as, "I wanted to explain our attendance policy", or, "I wanted to be sure you knew how often we assign homework", or something relatively innocuous. Then be sure and ALWAYS say, "I am enjoying having Timmy in class! Please call me anytime that you have any questions about anything".

So many parents are used to receiving only negative calls that this neutral "business" call can reap unexpected rewards. It establishes the relationship on a more positive note. Parents will let their precious urchin know that they expect good behavior in the class with that "nice teacher who called"! The parents will be more receptive to a negative call if one becomes necessary in the future. (Remember that even when the phone call is initiated to discuss a negative situation, start with something positive to say.)

Again, the 3 keys are: Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

- Communicate respectfully
- Communicate with concern
- Communicate with consistency

(Continued on page 2)

Power of “Over-responding”

Try this. If a parent comes to you with a concern, handle it in a timely manner. Get their agreement that they are happy with the response. Then, place a note in a tickler file to come back to your attention in a couple of weeks. Re-contact the parent and ask them if everything is still OK. This is called “over-responding”.

The results are surprising! Try it! It works!