

Quick Tips: Focus on Improving Communication

The goal of sharing information and building trusting relationships between school, families, and communities is reflected in the practices listed.

- Ensure that all materials sent home are clear, user friendly, and presented in a way that all parents can read and understand.
- Communicate in language that is jargon-free. Utilize translators as necessary.
- Build policies and systems that support teachers in communicating frequently with parents about student goals, curriculum plans, expectations for homework, and how parents can support student learning.
- Consider communication etiquette and taboos within the community.
- **Make it Positive:** Teachers most often communicate with parents when the student misbehaves, yet parents also want to know when their child is doing well. This helps parents be more responsive to both positive and challenging needs that may need to be addressed.
- **Make it Practical:** By helping parents understand the curriculum, they will be better able to support their child's academic achievement. Make specific suggestions about what parents can do to help their child manage difficulties they are having with schoolwork and help them build their child's strengths.
- **Make it Personal:** Collaboration between parents and teachers is enhanced when parents read or hear something personal about their child. Include specific examples and be as detailed as possible.
- **Make it Accessible:** By meeting families in their own natural environment, rather than only at the school, educators are seen as reaching out to families and acknowledging them as partners.
- Use a wide variety of methods for reaching parents such as print form, email, phone, Facebook, TV, radio, newspapers, extracurricular events, and through parent centers.
- Work to build the trust and confidence of parents through meet and greet opportunities near areas where students are dropped off and picked up, in the family center, and in classrooms.
- Put a chart or diagram of the school's organization in the school handbook. Explain how and when parents can contact the principal, teachers, counselors, and other staff. Let them know step by step how to resolve an issue or concern.
- Actively recruit and engage parents in developing and supporting district and school wide policies and improvement plans such as the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS), parent advisory committees, Title I, Bilingual Education, and Indian Education parental involvement requirements, and on staff hiring committees.

- Treat parent concerns, suggestions and ideas with respect and demonstrate genuine interest in developing solutions. Create and adhere a policy to always follow up with families in a timely manner (within 24 hours).
- Share the school and district annual reports of overall student and school achievement, school programs, and other initiatives with families. Use open meetings, events, Web sites and newsletters, etc. to create safe opportunities for families to ask questions and provide input.
- Include parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups on advisory councils, action teams, and committees. Include student representatives in elementary, middle, and high schools along with parents on committees.
- Encourage and facilitate parent participation in PTA or other parent organizations, advisory councils or committees for parent leadership and participation.
- Provide parents with user-friendly information for voting in local, state, and federal elections on officials and issues that affect education.
- Carefully consider design of school and district websites and the resources provided for families.