

## Parent Involvement: Challenges and Meaningful Change

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<b>Communication Dos &amp; Don'ts</b>	
<i><b>Do. . .</b></i>	<i><b>Don't. . .</b></i>
Before parents arrive at the school and your classroom, make sure that bulletin boards and signs reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of the student population.	Ignore the impact of the environment. Communication begins with the unspoken messages that the condition of the school, classroom, and bulletin boards reflect.
Attend to the comfort and esthetic quality of the space where parent conferences will be held. Make snacks and bottled water available.	Ignore the power of the environment to comfort, reassure, focus, and facilitate positive expectations.
Develop a recording keeping process that allows for documentation of positive as well as problem behaviors.	Focus behavioral records on problem behaviors exclusively. Not only does that set a negative tone, but valuable information about how to facilitate positive changes in behavior is lost.
Thank parents for their time and interest in working with the school. Let them know—even if they are unhappy about something—that their presence is appreciated and that their child is fortunate to have a parent demonstrates caring by being present and involved.	Make the assumption that parents know that they are appreciated.
Begin discussions with parents about how they are doing. Show an interest in them.	Ignore small talk and pleasantries that can ease a parent into a productive discussion.
Begin discussions about the student with positive statements about performance and the student's strengths.	Assume that parents know their student's strengths or have no need to discuss them.
Encourage parents to share their insights and observations. Ask about the student's likes, dislikes, needs, and strengths.	Assume that professionals know more than parents or are more capable than parents.
When sharing information about problem behaviors state facts and share objective data. Charts reflecting average numbers of points earned weekly in a behavioral program, photographs of damaged materials, and audio or video recordings (if you have written permission to make those recordings) are examples of objective formats for reporting problem behaviors.	Make evaluative or editorial statements about the child and parent. The parent will feel the need to defend the child and himself. A teacher may feel that child is rude or uncaring, but those evaluative labels elicit emotional reactions that get in the way of effective problem-solving. The focus of the discussion should be on antecedents and consequences, replacement skills, and other more productive components in the analysis of behavior.
When sharing information about academic progress and the results of assessments use parent friendly language.	Use jargon or present confusing charts and graphs.

<i>Do. . .</i>	<i>Don't. . .</i>
Emphasize areas of agreement when conflicts arise between parents and school personnel. Listen carefully to the parent's concerns, paraphrase, and ask the parent for his or her ideas about how to resolve the disagreement	Continue to confront the parent, threaten the parent with some type of administrative action, or make evaluative comments.
When conflicts arise between parents and school personnel, thank the parent again for being involved and committed to helping the student.	Continue to confront the parent, threaten the parent with some type of administrative action, or make evaluative comments.
If a parent has a history of being verbally or physically aggressive plan to have an administrator present.	Wait until an angry parent arrives to attempt to find support.
If a parent has expressed a concern prior to the conference date that requires input from additional support personnel, arrange for those individuals to be present.	Wait until the parent arrives to locate needed resources.
If a parent threatens you, notify administration, keep careful documentation of the student's progress as well as the parent's threats, and meet with the parent only with others present.	Argue with the parent or attempt to defend yourself verbally.  Take your frustration with the parent out on the student.
If a parent refuses to talk with you or respond to written notes, arrange for the School Social Worker or a colleague to make a home visit with you.	Stop reaching out to the parent. The parent could be feeling angry or depressed. Positive messages need to continue to be sent home.
<i>Use "I" Statements</i> I like it when Tyquan uses his words to tell me what he needs. I appreciate your support at home as we help him talk more and hit less.	<i>Use "You" Statements and Over-generalizations</i> Tyquan always talks out and you never sign his agenda or punish him for his misbehavior.
<i>Paraphrase to Check for Understanding</i> Please correct me if I misunderstood. You are concerned that other students in the class might be teasing Susie and believe that the teasing might be the real problem.	<i>Jump to Conclusions</i> So you think that Susie is just perfect and the only thing wrong is that others bother her—as if she has no responsibility for her choices at all.
When asking parents to implement a change at home, express respect for the demands on them and align expectations with areas of strength and need in the home. Engage the parents in a conversation about what is doable.	Assume that a parent doesn't care if he or she does not help with homework or complete some other school expected task.
Document, DOCUMENT, D-O-C-U-M-E-N-T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait until a problem arises to attempt to establish a relationship with the parents.</li> <li>• Wait until a problem arises to begin to document positives and problems.</li> <li>• Assume that the required documents such as report cards will be sufficient.</li> </ul>

## Sample Parent Survey

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact and Number \_\_\_\_\_

### Tell me about you and your child.

What does he/she like to do? \_\_\_\_\_

What does he/she dislike doing? \_\_\_\_\_

What worries him/her? \_\_\_\_\_

What are his/her dreams for the future? What would he/she like to do when he/she grows up?

\_\_\_\_\_

What does he/she like to eat and drink? \_\_\_\_\_

Is he/she allergic to anything? \_\_\_\_\_

What are your dreams for your child? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are your fears—if you have any? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How would you like for me to communicate with you? (Check all that apply)

Home Notes

Telephone Calls

Email \_\_\_\_\_

My Teaching Website: [www.docroc.com](http://www.docroc.com)

Other \_\_\_\_\_