

Managing/Improving Discipline in Your Classroom

Establish Better Communications with Parents

When to Communicate With Parents?

1. Teachers should establish positive communications by sending home positive notes or writing comments on papers. The more communication between parents and teachers, the fewer problems.
2. Parents should be contacted at the first sign of a problem.
3. Problems usually appear in two areas — learning and discipline.

How Can You Contact Parents?

1. The best way to reach parents is to mail a note home on Thursday. The note will arrive on Friday. Many parents will take action on their own to ensure that problems do not continue. Be sure that you use a plain envelope for this purpose since students are smart and many of them beat their parents to the mailbox.
2. If you have problems reaching the parents at home, contact their office or job site.
3. Phone calls should be made to the parents if problems continue.
4. If one parent isn't cooperative, call the other.
5. Still no action? Call the emergency number for the student. Many times you will get a grandmother.
6. If no help is offered or you can't reach the parent, send a certified letter.
7. When you have exhausted all means of reaching the parents, it is time to request the help of the administration.

Tips in Communicating With Parents

DO:

1. Address the parent by name and, if talking in person, look him or her in the eye.
2. State the problem in specific terms, ask for help, and let them know the consequences. For example, "If Johnny doesn't do his homework he will fail this course. He and I need your help to ensure this doesn't happen."
3. Offer the parent ideas on how they can help.
4. Summarize the conversation at the end and reiterate what you and the parent have agreed to do.
5. If possible, end the conversation on a positive note.
6. Follow up conversation with a note.

DON'T:

1. Apologize for bothering the parent, minimize the problem or belittle your abilities.
2. Downgrade the consequences of the student's behavior.

Conferences

1. Don't hold a conference if you are not prepared for it. If a parent enters the class during the day for an unscheduled visit, greet him/her pleasantly, but suggest another time for a conference. Explain that you want to give him/her your full attention and can only do so when the class is not present or your other responsibilities have been attended to.

When a parent calls for a conference:

- Be ready

- Answer questions and offer suggestions for improvement
- Remember, you can always ask for a break if one is needed — you might even go to the restroom.
- If threatened, ask for an end to the meeting. If the principal is not present, ask that the meeting be moved to his/her office.

When talking to parents:

- stay calm
- speak slowly
- keep it short
- don't become defensive or angry

IMPROVING DISCIPLINE IN OUR SCHOOLS IS IMPORTANT TO ALL OF US!