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Communication Strategies that Keep Parents Engaged

Parental engagement is one of the most important factors in the academic success of our students. Yet, teachers consistently cite it as one of their biggest challenges. Here are a few simple strategies to make it easy for you to communicate with parents throughout the year and build a relationship with them that will pay off for students in the long run.

Important Introductions

Let parents know at the beginning of the year that you want to get to know each child. Find out early in the year which method of communication parents prefer. Use the Back-to-School Parent Survey to collect their contact information, gain some basic information about each child from the perspective of the parents, and also set the expectation for ongoing open communication throughout the year.

Positive Postcards

A little positivity can go a long way, and some parents rarely get good news about their child. Make it a goal to provide positive feedback to every parent at least once or twice throughout the year. With more than 25 students, this may seem overwhelming, but a little preparation can help you stay organized and keep track of which parents have received a note and which haven't. Create two sets of mailing labels for your class. (Your school office staff probably already has this information ready and may be able to print them for you.) Print the Positive Postcards out on card stock and cut apart so that you have two postcards for each student. Apply the labels to the postcards and add the stamp. When you want to share something positive about a student, simply find the correct postcard, jot a quick note, and drop it in the mail. You'll know from the remaining postcards which students have not yet received theirs.

Document, Document, Document

When time is one of a teacher's most valuable resources, it's easy to create a communication binder that serves as a running record you can use to document exchanges with parents throughout the year. Print a Correspondence Log for each student in your class. Complete the top portion for each student and place the forms in a 3-ring binder so that you have a simple way to document how, when, and why you've reached out.

Tap into their Talents

Parents often underestimate what they have to contribute to your classroom. At the beginning of a unit or project, craft a parent letter that explains what the class will be learning and doing. Close the letter with a simple invitation to parents who may have knowledge or experience on the topic that they can share with the class. A simple statement such as, "If you have any knowledge or experience on this topic, we'd love for you to share it with us. Please contact me to schedule a convenient date and time to join us."