

How to work in partnership with parents and ensure they are informed and engaged in their child's progress

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Engaged, not just included

- * Research shows that there is a link between effective parenting and children making progress.
- * Engaging parents in learning makes for happier classrooms. A relationship that is already established is like 'saving for a rainy day'.

Consider who you want to be

- * Take time to think about what your best self looks like as a teacher.
- * Before long, you will consider how you come across to parents.

Acknowledge that parents are experts

- * They know their children
- * They are already involved in their children's learning
- * Demonstrate to parents how they are experts and give them due respect.
- * When they realise that they can make a difference, they will engage in their child's learning.

‘Judge not’

- * By talking to parents, you will realise how much they are already doing to support their child.
- * View parents as equals. Adjust your words and language to ensure your attitude of working as a team is very explicit.
- * Praise, praise, praise.

Parents have problems too

- * Family commitments
- * Work
- * Travel
- * Sickness

Where there are barriers, remove them

- * If it is English, have a translator.
- * If it is child care, arrange for someone engage with siblings during the time of meeting.
- * If it is a lack of confidence, have examples of where the parents have already made a difference.

Know the families

- * Not every child will have mother and a father.
- * Not every adult in a child's life will be their parent.
- * Ensure you know about each child's family.
- * Read the records.

What do the parents think ...?

- * Use anonymous questionnaires on aspects of home, on routines, on activities, suggestions for the classroom, for topics.
- * Have a comments box outside the classroom.
- * At pick up time, ask about their views on recent school events.

Wow, the school cares

- * Compliment the parents on some aspect of the child.
- * “Ahmed is a very polite boy. He always says good morning to me and Miss Heba, the TA.”
- * “The independence Sherifa has in dressing herself is a credit to your hard work and patience.”
- * Write notes in the home-school link book.

Win win situations

- * When there is an issue, don't make a parent feel guilty:
- * Plan what you are going to say and start off with positives; say something good about the child.
- * Be respectful in tone, words and manner.
- * If you have children, you may have had a similar struggle and can share this with the parent.

Plan difficult conversations

- * Difficult conversations are always easier if rapport has been established but sooner or later, you will have to have that conversation.
- * Have a designated space and speak to parents in private.
- * Have water available and put tissues on the table.
- * Consider who will sit where.
- * Put parents at ease by making a positive comment first.
- * Ensure parents leave with suggestions.

On the phone

- * You, or an administrator, usually ring home when something has happened.
- * Before you know it, parents receiving a phone call is an indication of bad news.
- * Therefore, plan some positive calls to offset this fear or dread.

Parents and friends

- * Some parents do find a school a daunting place.
- * Do try to allow friends & family to meetings and events that not normally too crowded.

Language

- * Go out of your way to know which language the parents speak.
- * Create a welcoming 'Hello' or Good Morning' display outside your classroom.
- * If you don't have translators for particular languages on the school staff, compile a list, from the parental body, of people willing to help out.

Plain Speak

- * Around school, you may use a lot of school jargon.
- * It's very important not to use terms and expressions that are meaningless to parents.
- * CAT, PIRA, PUMA ?
- * It is important that written communication is jargon-free.
- * In reports, keep the reader in mind.

How was school today?

- * Parents enjoy being given tips on how to open a conversation with their child on how the day went.
- * All too often, the children will say that they did nothing.
- * Give parents tips:
 - What questions did you ask today?
 - On a scale of 1 to 10, how was your day?
 - Tell me a funny thing that happened today.
 - What went well today?
 - What was your least favourite part of today?

Remind parents to praise

- * Introduce parents to the work of Professor Carol Dweck and the importance of praising effort, not grades.
- * Give parents a bank of phrases to use in order to motivate:
- * “I love the way you stayed within the lines with this picture.”
- * “You must have worked very hard to get all those definitions right.”
- * “You’re a really hard worker.”
- * “I love the effort that went into that.”
- * “I love the time you took with this.”

Reading is fun

- * Explain the importance of reading to and with children, rather than just listening to children read.
- * Tell parents how they can set an example by reading too.
- * Show parents how discussing the illustrations can improve conversations between parent and child.
- * Remind parents how important meals are for conversation and talking, and how this will have an impact on the child's literacy skills.

The summer holiday

- * Keep plugging the importance of continuing to learn in July and August.
- * Whilst you want the summer to be fun do provide advice to parents on how to keep on learning:
- * Provide a fun activity pack for those who need one
- * Show how to chat about numeracy when cooking, eating pizza, in the shops.
- * Keep a scrapbook of places visited.
- * Find ways to 'write' (lists, postcards, emailing friends)

Work with colleagues

- * Ask your colleagues for useful suggestions on what works for them.
- * Enlist the support of your line manager and discuss how 'working with parents can be one of your targets'.
- * Create a suggestion board in the staffroom.
- * Talk to your middle leaders or senior leaders about any barriers to effective engagement.

Include parents in the policy

- * In light of parental engagement, revisit the teaching and learning policy.
- * Does it mention the role of parents and carers?
- * Does it mention how parents can be supported in their role?

Feedback

- * Receive feedback from parents by having them complete a questionnaire.
- * An example from Optimus Education can be found here [Parent Questionnaire](#)

Professional Development

CPD is vital:

- * Observe other school meetings with parents and invite colleagues to observe your meetings
- * Apply for training in Engaging with Parents
- * Apply for Coaching and Mentoring courses
- * Run a course for colleagues. An example from Optimus Education is attached: [training session](#)

The heart of the matter

- * The Code of Practice best sums it up:
- * We ‘should listen to and address any concerns raised by the children and young people themselves.’
- * ‘Parents know their children best and it is important that all professionals listen and understand when parents express concerns about their child’s development.’