

It's All about the "R"
Building Relationships
with Parents



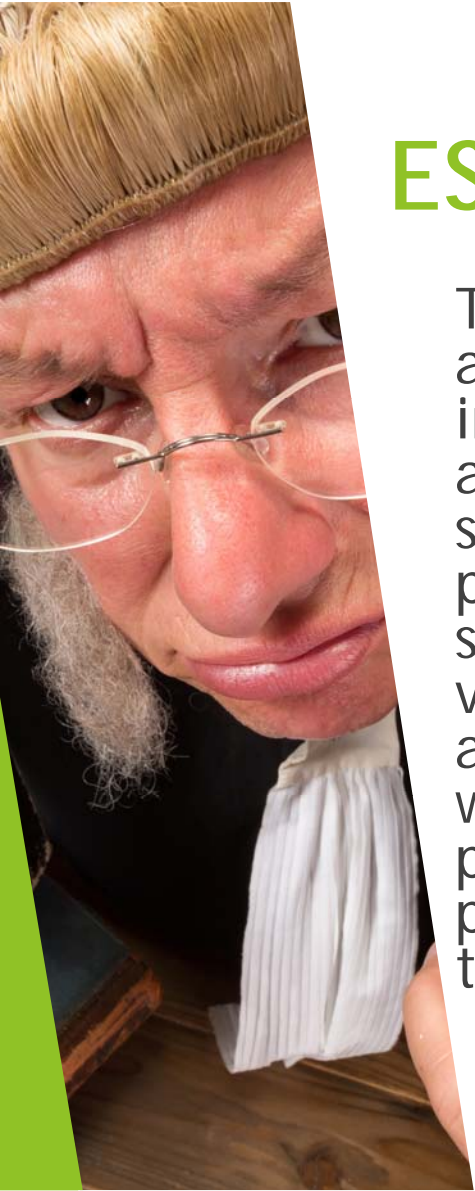


If you'd like your students to be successful, you will need to rearrange the letters in "parent," add an "r" from relationship, and turn a parent into a **PARTNER!**

Katy Ridnouer, author, *Managing Your Classroom With Heart*

Very important
members of your
classroom
community are
PARENTS





ESSA, Section 1116 (e)(3)

To ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership among the school involved,...each school and local educational agency assisted **SHALL** educate teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, principals, other school leaders, and other staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as **EQUAL** partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school.

SHALL = MUST

Build “bridges,” not walls,
between yourself and
parents.



Turn to your neighbor and
discuss:

What are **THREE** things
TEACHERS wish **PARENTS**
would do?



Ten things TEACHERS wish PARENTS would do:

1. Be involved in the child's education
2. Accept parental responsibilities
3. Provide resources at home for reading and learning
4. Set a good example
5. Encourage children to do their best at school
6. Emphasize importance of academics

7. Support school rules and goals
8. Use parental pressure positively
9. Be proactive
10. Inform school of situations that may impact school performance



Now, what are TEN
things you think
PARENTS wish TEACHERS
would do?



Ten things PARENTS wish TEACHERS would do:

1. Build student's self-esteem
2. Care about their children and keep them safe
3. Treat ALL children fairly
4. Teach the material students need to succeed
5. Communicate often and openly with parents
6. Set high academic standards





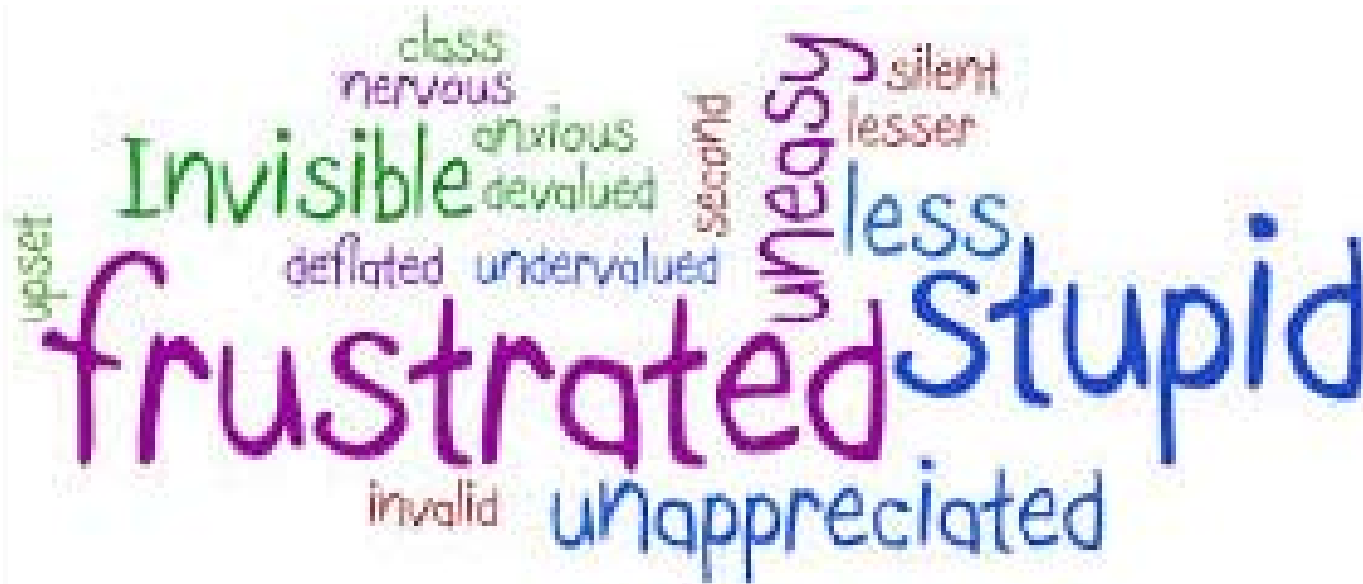
7. Set high academic standard
8. Be enthusiastic, energetic and positive
9. Respect rights and efforts of parents/guardians and encourage parent participation
10. Be aware of students' different learning styles



Why do some parents resist involvement?

Brainstorm with a partner about possible reasons.

Be ready to share
ONE idea.

A word cloud of negative emotions and feelings. The words are arranged in a roughly rectangular shape, with some words being larger and more prominent than others. The colors of the words include shades of green, purple, blue, and brown. The words are: 'Invisible', 'frustrated', 'Stupid', 'uneasy', 'less', 'upset', 'class', 'nervous', 'obvious', 'devalued', 'deflated', 'undervalued', 'second', 'silent', 'lesser', 'invalid', and 'unappreciated'.

class
nervous
obvious
Invisible
devalued
deflated
undervalued
second
uneasy
silent
lesser
less
Stupid
frustrated
invalid
unappreciated
upset

PARENTS often feel....

Partnering with Parents to Establish Community

“Schooling is first and foremost about relationships between and among students, teachers, and [parents], and... community building ...[which improves] teaching and learning.”

Thomas Sergiovanni in Building Community in Schools



Create a positive CLASSROOM COMMUNITY by . . .

- Establishing routines and work habits in students first; content can come later
- Teaching organizational skills
- Learning students' names
- Planning your first day down to the minute
- Standing as you speak
- Using a firm but soft voice
- Beginning many sentences with "We will..." and "You will..."



Standing outside your door when students arrive. This establishes authority and suggests you consider them important enough to be waiting on them.

Setting high standards for yourself if you want a highly productive environment and if you expect students to meet high expectations of achievement!



Communicating with Parents and Families

- Face-to-Face
 - Two-way/meaningful
- Emails/Texts
- Phone calls
- Social Media
- Newsletter
- Website
- Take-home notes



BUILDING THE PARTNERSHIP

- Don't let assumptions and generalizations about parents and families guide your efforts.
- Don't rely on observations or experiences of other teachers to cloud your judgment of students.
- *If you're genuinely interested in what a parent feels or wants, **ASK.***

Student Information

Full Name: _____ Date of birth: _____

Parent/guardian's names: _____

Mailing Address: (street or PO Box) _____

Parent/guardian's phone number: (home) _____ (cell) _____

Parent/guardian's E-mail address: _____ Your E-mail address: _____

Your cell phone number: _____ Do you have access to the Internet at home? _____

This Semester's Schedule

1. _____ Teacher _____

2. _____ Teacher _____

3. _____ Teacher _____

4. _____ Teacher _____

- Do you have any health issues I should know about? _____ If so, what are they?
- List after school activities in which you participate (sports, band, work, etc.):
- What are the top 5 songs you listen to ALL the time?
- What are your plans after high school? What are your career plans?
- What is your favorite candy or dessert? Are you allergic to any food? _____ Please list food allergies:
- What was your favorite class last year? Why?
- **Above And Beyond:** On the back, please write a paragraph about yourself. Tell me anything else that you want me to know about you. Please do your very best work.

In a Million Words or Less... (Homework for Parents)

Dear Parent/Guardian

IN A MILLION WORDS OR LESS . . . TELL ME ABOUT YOUR SCHOLAR!

Yes, you are getting a homework assignment! It takes me a great deal of time to know your child. Some I never really know. This activity gives you a chance to tell me what you think I should know about your scholar. I will read your "homework." I will not share your comments with any other person, including other teachers, unless you tell me in your message that I can.

Your scholar is in for a great experience this semester. The curriculum is rigorous, but very doable. I teach from a thematic approach and expect my students to read, write, think, work in groups, work independently, and be creative. Most importantly, I want students to make connections between what we read and study and real life -- especially their lives. This should be a very exciting and busy semester.

Take your time with this, but there must be a deadline. Please send *In a Million Words or Less . . .* to me no later than _____. You can either send it with your scholar or email it to me. You can find my email address below.

Communication is important! Please feel free to call on me, email me, or visit any time you have questions or concerns. I appreciate your time and effort.

Sincerely,

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

Words of encouragement are always welcome and create a positive effect.



Partner with parents by...

Being proactive!

- ▶ Reach out ... make a friendly, positive introductory contact before any specific student concerns arise.
- ▶ Send a “Before School Starts” greeting.
- ▶ Share positive school messages often.
- ▶ Share student talents and accomplishments.





Maintaining contact with
parents is CRITICAL!!!

*Set up as many positive interactions
as possible - as soon as possible!!*

Positive parent communication is vital to help students succeed, enhance your professional reputations, and save you a great deal of stress.





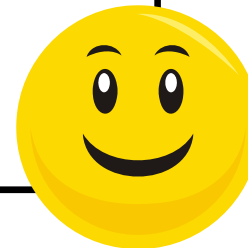
By taking steps to be a positive communicator, you'll greatly increase the likelihood that your students' parents are involved in their learning—and that the "word on the street" is nothing but good.

HAPPY-GRAMS

(minimum of 2 per semester)

I just wanted you to know

Find at least ONE positive comment to make about every student. Use mailing labels to keep track of notes sent.



POSITIVE MESSAGE TO PARENTS

Dear <Name of Parent/Guardian>

I am writing to let you know how pleased I am with
<Name of Student> recent success in my class. You will
be happy to know that <Description of Success>

I know you are as proud of this effort and achievement
as I am. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



REMEMBER THE POWER OF "R"

► NEVER lose sight of the fact that you and the parent are working together to lead the child to success!

Partnering = Positive Collaboration

- ▶ Maintain relationships with parents through meaningful two-way communication.
- ▶ Provide progress reports on a regular basis





- ▶ Have parents sign papers with GOOD GRADES as well as ones with not so good grades.
- ▶ Compliment parents to other people. Don't hesitate to let students know that you think highly of their parents.
- ▶ Make it a habit to thank parents for their support whenever you see them.

Use SOCIAL MEDIA as a platform
for positive interaction with
parents





Partnering with Parents = Strong Team

- Families care about their children.
- Family members are equal partners in a child's education.
- The home environment is the "primary" educational environment.



Partnering with Parents Creates a Caring Community

- ▶ Be sensitive and responsive to the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of parents and families.
- ▶ For many parents, involvement in their child's education program is a new experience.

Don't set parents up to fail by giving them complicated materials, complex instructions, and a heavy schedule of nightly tutoring.



Begin with something simple that is likely to be rewarding to the parent and the child .

- ▶ All families have strengths; emphasize their assets.
- ▶ Provide opportunities and support so parents can learn ways to help their children.

Believe that schools and families influence each other.



- ▶ Sometimes parents will ask questions that you cannot answer or request services you cannot provide.
- ▶ The mark of a real professional is knowing the limits of your expertise and when you need help. It's okay to say, "I don't know." Parents will think more highly of you.

Parent Conference, are you prepared?





Conferences
can be
stressful for
EVERYONE!

When you have concerns, let parents know!

Dear Parent or Guardian of _____

The purpose of this communication is to inform you that I am presently experiencing some problems with _____. I would greatly appreciate your cooperation in working with me in trying to take corrective measures to eliminate these problems.

The attitudes and habits listed below are important elements that have a significant affect on the success of a classroom. I have checked the areas that are making it difficult for your child to be successful and reach his/her potential in my class:

AREAS OF CONCERN

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| ___ Excessive talking | ___ Disturbing others | ___ Lack of effort |
| ___ Inattention | ___ Disrespectful of others | ___ Bad attitude |
| ___ Excessive tardies | ___ Excessive absences | ___ Not prepared for class |
| ___ Incomplete or missing assignments | ___ Sleeps in class | |
| ___ Excessive detention | | |

...continued

At this time _____ has an average of _____.

If you have any questions, please contact me at school. My planning period is _____. If you would like a personal conference, please contact the counseling office for arrangements at XXX-XXXX. I appreciate your help in seeing that _____ is successful in _____.

Sincerely,
[Signature]

Document,
Document,
DOCUMENT!

SUGGESTIONS FOR DOCUMENTING:

- ✓ Keep accurate documentation of all academic and behavioral problems.
- ✓ Use notebook with one page designated for each student or a 3x5 index card.
- ✓ Provide specific, factual, observable data.
- ✓ Keep folder with student work, copies of correspondence, notes of phone conversations.

1

Plan what you want to say and what information the parent needs to know.

2

Find a phone at school from which you can make the call with some privacy.

3

Begin with a positive statement.

4

Describe the concern, then ask for the parent's help in solving the problem.

Parent Phone Call

Describe the behavior that necessitated the call.

Be very specific

- ▶ “Kim laughed out loud at inappropriate moments six times today and fell asleep after lunch”

NOT

- ▶ “I had a problem with Kim today.”

Describe the steps you have taken and give the results of your actions.



- Pay attention while the parent explains what s/he knows about the situation.
- Listen carefully and clarify any points you don't understand.
- Never lose sight of the fact that you and the parent are working together to solve the problem.



- Have a plan in mind to resolve the problem/issue before you call.
- Present your plan to the parent and discuss how together you and the parent can work on this issue/problem.
- Agree on an effective course of action and a follow-up contact from you.
- Finish the call with a positive statement.

Before you move on to your next task, document the call so you have a record of the conversation and what each party agreed to do.



FACE TO FACE CONFERENCE

The All-Important Conference

- ▶ Focus on the positives, as well as the areas for improvement.
- ▶ Your goal is to forge an alliance with the parents as your PARTNER.
- ▶ Consider asking your mentor, a counselor, or a member of the administrative staff to be in attendance. Inform parents if additional school personnel will be present.

BEFORE the conference:

- ▶ Prepare your message. Have a clear purpose for the conference and an understanding of the outcome you would like.
- ▶ Write down the points to cover.
- ▶ Gather samples of student work (evidence such as progress reports, detention slips, referral forms, homework, quizzes, etc.)
- ▶ Note student's strengths as well as other special information you want to present.



- ▶ Arrange for conference to be held in a public place (counseling or media center).
- ▶ If conference is in your room, leave door open and make sure other teachers are in the building.



- ▶ Create a comfortable seating arrangement. Don't sit behind your desk.
- ▶ Remain calm before, during, and after the conference; if you lose you cool, you gain nothing.

DURING the conference:

- ▶ Begin promptly.
- ▶ Express appreciation to parents for coming to the conference; establish a tone of good will and friendly cooperation.
- ▶ Use familiar terms, not jargon; avoid emotion-laden statements
- ▶ Begin with positive remarks about the child; convey attitude that the child's welfare is your primary concern.
- ▶ Practice your very best manners.

State

State problems in simple, factual terms.

Be

Be specific!
Have examples of student's work available.

State

State steps you have taken to correct the problem.

Be

Your nonverbal language is crucial for success; be friendly and attentive.

Balance the “air time.”

While you have many important points to make, allow parents to have adequate time to speak about issues and to ask questions.

Only after parents have had a chance to vent will they be willing to listen and work on a solution.

- ▶ End the conference by recapping the points you have covered.
- ▶ Determine next steps.
- ▶ Thank parents for their concern and taking time to attend the conference.

thank you!

AFTER the Conference:

Follow through on your agreements.

Document the time, place, participants, and essence of the conference for future reference.

RECAP OF IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

- ▶ Keep your cool.
- ▶ The student and his/her needs come first.
- ▶ Ask for parent suggestions
- ▶ Remember the value of the “**R**”
- ▶ If possible, schedule conferences in public places like the Counseling Department, Media Center, or main office. If conference is in your classroom, keep your door open.
- ▶ Whether or not some other school official is actually seated with you during the meeting, make sure other school personnel are nearby.

RECAP OF WHAT TO AVOID:

- ▶ Discussing other teachers' treatment of the student
- ▶ Comparing the student to siblings
- ▶ Arguing with the parent or putting the parent on the defensive.
- ▶ Attempting to psychoanalyze the student or the parent.

Be objective, not subjective.

RECAP: The Power of the 'R'

Building Relationships with Parents

- ▶ Contact every parent at the beginning of the school year/semester
- ▶ Be proactive
- ▶ Reach out immediately if a conflict occurs
- ▶ Seek help from other school professionals to help with the problem
- ▶ Return calls/emails promptly
- ▶ Use caution in responding to negative e-mails.
- ▶ Don't talk to parents when you are mad.
- ▶ Document all interactions with students and parents
- ▶ Not addressed earlier, but refuse to be intimidated or to accept verbal abuse

Statewide Parent and Family Engagement Initiative

At Region 16 Education Service Center
Funded by Texas Education Agency



Terri Stafford: terri.stafford@esc16.net

Skip Forsyth: skip.forsyth@esc16.net