

Working with Parents





Humans choose their behaviors as a function of their knowledge base (have to know how to do it) and their attitudes (values or beliefs)

Behavior

Knowledge Base

(We know how to do this if knowledge is this problem.)

Attitudes

Beliefs and Values
(We adopt these based upon our experiences.)

We make a mistake when we over-rely on knowledge base and under-rely on the influence of values or belief systems



We adopt attitudes (beliefs and values) based upon our experiences, and as an adaptation designed to explain and predict our experiences.



Therefore to change a person's (my) attitude, we (I) must change his/her (my) experiences.



We serve as change agents when we provide new experiences for people.





At the Beginning of the Year

- Call home to introduce yourself, especially if the family did not attend Sneak Peek or Open House.
- Be positive about the year and the student.
- Let the family know how to best contact you and ask when is best to contact them and how they would like you to do that.



During the Year

- Phone
- Email
- Snail Mail
- Planned Face-to-Face - Conferences
- Unplanned Face-to-Face

When You Make the Initial “There’s an Issue” Contact



- Have your notes or a script ready so you can keep the conversation on track.
- Call at a time that is convenient for both you and the family.
- Never put parents on the defensive.
- Be tactful and diplomatic.
- Know that both you and the parents want what is best for the student. Strive to work as a team.
- If you say you are going to do something, **do it**.
- **SMILE** throughout the conversation.

When Returning Calls

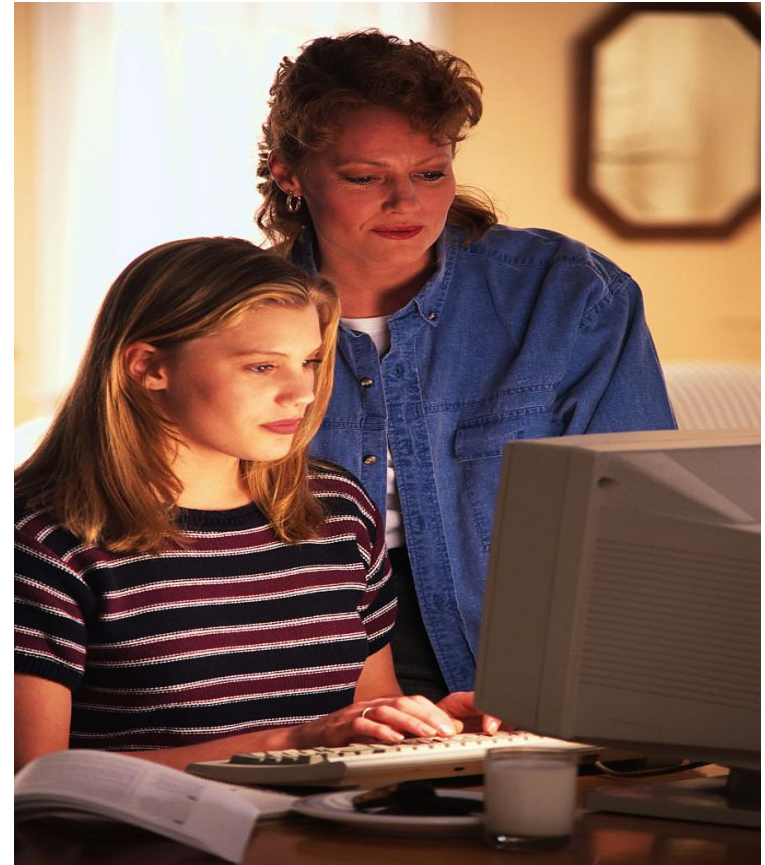


- Try to find out in advance why parents want you to call.
- Bring something on which to take notes.
- Listen to the parent and restate their comments to show that you hear what they are saying.
- Work together to address the situation.
- If possible, end the conversation on a positive note.



Email and US Postal Service

Parent-Teacher Conferences



Planning the Conference



- Be flexible with the time, within reason.
- Have an idea of what you hope to accomplish.
- Try to find out who is coming.
- Send a reminder of the date and time.



Before the Conference



Document everything.

- Keep a log of the child's behavior.
 - Keep track of the child's grades and any missing assignments.
 - Pull student work together ahead of time.
 - Keep a record of all communications with parents.
 - Communicate any concerns early.
 - Solicit others' support.
 - Test out tactics.
 - Stage a comfortable atmosphere for the conference within your room and in a waiting area.
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- Rose, M. 2005, March. Handle with care: The difficult parent-teacher conference. Instructor Magazine. Retrieved from <http://content.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4190>.

At the Conference



- Welcome with warmth.
- Put it in writing.
- Weigh your words.
- Allow for anger.
- Seek parents' suggestions.
- Have solutions in mind.
- Offer concrete suggestions that the parents can use at home.
- Find the student's greatest strength and build on that.
- Partner with other school personnel.
- Stay on schedule.



- Rose, M. 2005, March. Handle with care: The difficult parent-teacher conference. Instructor Magazine. Retrieved from <http://content.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4190>.

After the Conference



- Follow-up.
- Keep communicating.
- Do whatever it is you said you were going to do for the family and the child.



•Rose, M. 2005, March. Handle with care: The difficult parent-teacher conference. Instructor Magazine. Retrieved from <http://content.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4190>

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Tips for Working with Parents

1. Use the adult voice.
2. In generational poverty, weakness is not respected. Do not show fear.
3. Use stories whenever possible.
4. Remember the importance of non-verbals. Your intent determines non-verbals.
5. Offer a cup of coffee or a soft drink.
6. Say: “I know you love and care about your child. Otherwise you wouldn’t be here. What can we do so that you know we care as well?”
7. Remember that often the conference is reported back to the neighborhood.



Parents

1. Physical presence not linked to achievement.
2. More frequently/less favorable the attitude.

Involvement

- Insistence
- Support
- Expectations

Parent Groups Typically Seen in Schools

1. Two-career parents
2. Parents who are involved
3. Immigrant parents
4. Single parent
5. Surrogate parents
6. Parents who are not working and not involved
7. Parents who are not available
8. Students who, in effect, are their own parents



Scenarios