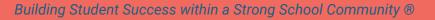




COMMUNICATION

Teacher to Parent

Phone Calls





Teacher to Parent Phone Calls

Parents may expect only negative information about their child from the teacher, but this perception can be altered. A positive phone call acknowledging a student's improved work or continued effort, thanking a parent for helping out on a class project, or personally inviting a parent to a special event will increase a family's comfort with teachers. These phone calls can be brief; essentially, the intention is to make sure the parent is aware of what a great job the child is doing.

Research supports the use of phone calls to engage families and support students. For example, in a randomized experimental study, Kraft and Dougherty (2013) found that frequent teacher phone calls and text/written messages with families increased students' engagement. Bennett-Conroy (2012) used TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork, an interactive homework tool developed by Epstein, Van Voorhis, and colleagues) and teacher phone calls as the basis for a quasi-experimental comparison. In all cases, students' homework completion and parent involvement increased and grades improved.

Phone calls are a personal form of communication and may be difficult for teachers who do not have phones in their classrooms or within communities where families do not have consistent access to phones or change numbers frequently. However, this type of communication ensures direct contact and allows the teacher to be certain that families are indeed receiving important information.

Phone calls may be used to communicate with parents about their children, including to:

- → welcome them to the classroom at the beginning of the school year
- → share special accomplishments
- → share information about the child's progress
- → provide positive information about the child
- → update families about classroom activities
- → express support and/or concern for students

Developing guidelines for conducting phone calls may also help make this form of communication effective. It helps to outline the major topics to address with parents during a phone call. It is important that the teacher introduces himself/herself, explains the purpose of the call, provides the parent with pertinent information, and encourages parent feedback. Providing specific descriptions of the student's behavior and conveying support and enthusiasm for the student's accomplishments are likely to enhance the effectiveness of the phone communication. **Taking time to listen is imperative.**

Using a brief agenda can serve as an informal script and provide a record of your communication with the parents. A sample worksheet is included in this section that highlights items to discuss when contacting parents by phone, welcoming them to the classroom at the beginning of the school year. The worksheet provides teachers with an agenda/checklist to guide phone calls, as well as a sample script.

To maximize the success of telephone communication, practices need to be developed to ensure that teachers have access to phones and promptly receive messages. Principals and school staff need to make accommodations to ensure that teachers have the time and resources to make phone calls to parents. Role play during professional development may also enhance teachers' comfort and effectiveness.

Communicating through telephone calls may be difficult for parents who do not have consistent access to a phone or are not fluent in English. Thus, alternative arrangements need to be made for these families. A translator may be very helpful for written or in-person communication with parents who have difficulty in conversing in English, and teachers can request to meet personally with parents who do not have regular access to a phone.

Teacher's Phone Call Worksheet Sample

| Student's Name: |
|-----------------------------------|
| Parent's Name: |
| Telephone #: |
| Date/Time of first attempt: |
| Date/Time of additional attempts: |

- 1. Introduce yourself and describe the purpose of the phone call.
- 2. Consider including some of the following::
 - Briefly describe activities and curriculum that are planned for the classroom.
 - Encourage parents to visit the classroom and provide guidelines for contacting the teachers.
 - Let parents know what you will be doing to maintain ongoing communication with them throughout the school year.
- 3. Inquire if the parent has any questions, concerns, or comments.
- 4. Thank parents for their time, and let them know that you look forward to working with them and their child.

Note here if parent prefers a call (best time?), text, email, in person, etc.; is translator needed?

| Communication Log | | | |
|-------------------|------------|-----------|--|
| Date | Discussion | Follow-up | |
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