Concepts addressed:
Develop and Utilize Active Partnerships Among Teachers, Parents/Guardians and Leaders in the Community to Support the Educational Process

Developing Active Partnerships with Parents

Communicating: with Parents

- Consider communicating with parents before school begins. You may want to call parents and introduce yourself, invite them to open house and answer any questions they may have.
- You may prefer to send a postcard or letter of introduction to each student's home. This letter could also include your plans for the year as well as your contact information.
- If you have not communicated with parents prior to school beginning, send a letter home on the first day with students. This letter could include an introduction, an invitation to open house, and contact information.
- You might follow this introductory letter with a second letter that includes your discipline plan and what you expect from students.
- Continue ongoing communication throughout the year. This can be done through telephone calls, notes home, weekly folders, e-mails, class web sites and informal meetings.
- Consider contacting 3 parents each week with positive calls home. Share students' successes and accomplishments.
- Create parent newsletters, which list activities parents can complete with their child at home on the weekend, during school vacations or on the summer break.

Open House or Back to School Night

- Open House or Back to School Night is a time for teachers to meet with their students' parents and share information about the coming school year. It is not generally a time for individual parent teacher conferences.
- Plan a short presentation in which you can share the daily schedule, classroom rules and procedures, academic goals for the year, grading procedures and homework policies.
- Distribute a parent handbook, which includes your schedule, homework policies, discipline policies, school calendar and contact information.
- In addition, this is an excellent time to seek parent volunteers, share classroom needs and discuss how you will be communicating with parents throughout the year.
- Allow time for questions and answers as well as time for parents to tour the room and review classroom texts and materials.
- Consider having students write a note to their parents. The parents can read the message and write a reply, which the students can read in the morning.

Parent Teacher Conferences

- Parent teacher conferences are generally scheduled 2 - 3 times a year. They are a time to meet
individually with parents to discuss their child's progress.

- Prior to conferences, you may need to schedule individual parent appointments, which will last between 15-30 minutes. Some schools may have open conference times in which parents will drop by and visit with you as they arrive.
- To prepare for each conference, review each student's file and have grades, as well as student work, ready to share.
- Make a list of points that you would like to cover, including each child's strengths and areas of improvement.
- Prepare your room to be inviting and welcoming. Set up a round table where everyone can sit comfortably and all materials are on display. Greet parents at the door and thank them for coming
- Begin conferences with introductions and positive statements about the child.
- Share student work and documentation, then listen actively to parents' concerns and questions. Create a plan of remediation, if necessary.
- End the conference with a summary of what was discussed and follow-up responsibilities.
- Schedule phone conferences for those parents who were unable to attend.

Parent Volunteers

- Invite parents to serve as guest speakers in your classroom, sharing about their jobs, travels or talents.
- Parents can also volunteer to help by supervising activities, reading with children, and tutoring children who need assistance.
- Seek out parents who are willing to help with class parties or supervision of field trips.
- Parents can also help prepare materials, create bulletin boards, and complete clerical tasks.