

Creating Home-School Connections

It is important for teachers and families to work together to provide the best learning experience possible for children. Here are key things to remember when establishing connections between home and school.

For Educators:

1. **Communicate Regularly.** Determine what type of communication works best. Preferred communication can be different for each family, so it is important to consider multiple methods that may include: weekly newsletters, posting on websites, parent-educator communication notebooks, emails, phone calls, text messaging, social media, and in-person meetings.
 - Survey parents at the beginning of the year to determine their preferred communication method, and to whom communication should be directed.
 - At the beginning of the year, set up a system of communication and let families know what to expect.
 - Create a communication log so you can track communication with all families.
 - Schedule an initial meeting with families, and discuss plans for follow up meetings.

2. **Have an open door policy.** Welcome families at the beginning of each school year and let them know that they are welcome in the classroom. Set up opportunities for families to visit and participate in classroom activities when possible. Consider planning events around family schedules to allow them to come in at a time that fits their schedule.
 - Create a welcoming classroom by greeting families with a smile when they enter the room.
 - Share the daily schedule with parents/caregivers so they know what to expect. Then post it where it can easily be accessed, such as on your classroom door or website or Facebook page.
 - Schedule regular (e.g., monthly) family events. Schedule events at a variety of times (morning, lunchtime, after school, evening) to accommodate different family schedules.
 - Have chairs in the classroom designated for families' use during a visit.
 - Provide translation if needed.

3. **Set goals together.** Work with parents/caregivers to set common goals for their children. Check in with parents often. Remember that goals should change throughout the year as students and parents' needs change.
 - At the beginning of the year, ask parents/caregivers what they want for their child.
 - Share expectations/milestones for the year.
 - Share ways that families can help their children meet the goals at home. Provide specific examples that show how learning can happen in everyday moments. For example, fold and sort laundry to learn colors and how to categorize; count and measure in the kitchen to explore concepts like full, empty, more than and less than; and read, sing songs and play word games to support language and literacy goals.
 - Revisit goals on a regular basis (e.g., quarterly) with parents and update as needed.

4. **Share information.** Provide opportunities for families to learn new strategies that they can use with their children. Model these strategies and allow time to practice. Share information about how they can use the new strategies at home.
 - Set up family meetings/trainings to share information. Try to accommodate different family schedules by offering meetings/trainings at a variety of times. Provide strategies and activities connected to learning goals for families to do at home. Explain how these will help their children.
 - Create opportunities for parents/caregivers to see you modeling the strategies and activities.
 - When possible provide materials for families—books or take-home activities.

5. **Connect families with the community.** Determine the needs of your families and help connect them to resources available in the community. Bring members of the community in to talk to parents and children.
 - Provide a list of community resources.
 - Post a schedule of community events.
 - Invite people from community agencies to share information with families.
 - Connect families with resources based on their individual needs and goals.

For Families:

1. **Talk to your child's teacher.** Decide how you will communicate throughout the year. Introduce yourself and your child. Share information about your child: his likes, dislikes, any specific needs that your child may have to help his teacher connect with him.
 - Set up a meeting with your child's teacher.
 - Establish the preferred method of communication with teacher (e.g., email, phone calls, text messages).
 - Use moments like drop off and pick up to make connections with the teachers. Set up a meeting time when more in-depth conversation is required.
2. **Visit the classroom.** Ask the teacher for times to visit your child's classroom. Observe the routine and participate as much as possible. Visiting the classroom is a great opportunity to learn what your child is doing throughout the day and make connections to what you are doing at home.
 - Set up times to volunteer in the classroom. For example, ask the teacher if you could be a guest reader, help with an activity in the classroom or provide materials for an activity.
 - As you observe and participate in classroom activities, think about how you could connect them to activities at home.
3. **Set goals for your child.** Work with your child's teacher to set goals. Tell the teacher what goals you have for your child and talk about how you can work together to achieve those goals. Remember, these goals will change as the year goes on. Meet with the teacher multiple times to revisit goals and set new ones.
 - Discuss concerns you have with teacher.
 - Share additional information about your child that will assist the teacher in working with him or her.
4. **Stay involved.** Remember to check every day to see if your child's teacher has shared information with you. Attend family events and conferences and visit the classroom when possible.
 - Check your child's backpack, cubby, notes posted in the classroom, the teacher's website, etc. for updates.
 - Pay attention to the school calendar and find events that fit your schedule.
 - Consider joining a parent association / parent council.
5. **Make connections.** Talk with your child about what she is doing in school. Find ways to extend that learning at home. Use activities that your child's teacher shares with you. Visit places in the community (e.g., library, parks, museums, community festivals and events) to explore new learning opportunities.
 - Get to know the other families in the classrooms.
 - Keep other people in your child's life informed about school activities and events.