

Classroom Insights From Educational Psychology

A Developmental Approach to Educating Young Children



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Table 3.4 Creating Partnerships With Parents and Families

<i>Partnership Values</i>	<i>Practical Suggestions</i>
Create a warm, welcoming school and classroom atmosphere for parents to visit and participate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome and communicate with parents using positive and relaxed body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. • Provide a choice of activities for parents (e.g., a parent may feel more comfortable decorating bulletin boards than reading to students). • Create a parent resource room or space for parents to connect. • Address parents by name and find out some details about their lives and interests. • Spend time outside class getting to know parents (e.g., invite them to stay for lunch, come early for coffee, etc.).
Model positive communication behavior such as active listening and conflict resolution skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep eye contact and maintain an open posture (e.g., don't cross your arms, sit behind your desk, etc.) when talking. • Listen with the intention of "checking in" to make sure parents' concerns are heard (e.g., "I can see that you are worried about your child's progress and stress level. Can you tell me more about why you are concerned?"). • Use language translators whenever there is a language barrier or when parents feel more comfortable communicating in their native language.
Commit to ongoing two-way communication channels that become part of the school and classroom culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute routine notes, memos, or photos about classroom news. • Provide a central place in the classroom where parents can go for more information. • Use the Internet, e-mail, and homework webpage to communicate ideas, events, quotes for the week, and so forth. • Incorporate home visits, especially for transitions to elementary school. • Use parent surveys to solicit input on various classroom practices, and identify their talents, skills, and availability.

Provide avenues of respect and sensitivity for parents to express their goals, choices, and concerns about their children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value and model these beliefs. • Reflect (write about) your feelings about parents and potential conflicts. • Seek out a trusted mentor educator to discuss feelings and ideas.
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positive relationships is central in successful school reform efforts. We began with a look at the quality of teacher-student relationships, how these relationships might be formed and perpetuated, and how to enhance positive relationships, even with children who challenge teacher efforts. We also discussed the importance of peer relationships in school and what teachers can do to promote (and refrain from inhibiting) these relationships in and out of the classroom. Finally, we looked at research demonstrating the value of creating partnerships with children's parents and families to further children's development and learning in school. A theme of this chapter is that children, parents, and teachers need regular opportunities for positive interactions to build relationships and the support of others to perform well in their roles.

Questions to Ponder

1. Think of individual children in preschool or the primary grades with whom you have enjoyed both positive and less positive relationships, and respond to the questions listed in Table 3.1. Considering the material in this chapter, attempt to explain the reasons for the quality of these relationships from the children's perspectives.
2. Think about Katie in *The Child's Window*. Considering the brief background provided, what do you think explains her current problems with the teacher and peers? What would you do at the parent conference