

SAMVEDANA

The Home-School Team - A Winning Combination

Children learn best when the significant adults in their lives—parents, teachers and other family and community members - work together to encourage and support them. The need for a strong partnership between schools and families to educate children may seem like common sense. In olden times this relationship was natural and easy to maintain. Teachers and parents were often neighbours and found many occasions to discuss a child's progress. Children heard the same messages from teachers and parents and understood that they were expected to uphold the same standards at home and at school. As society has become more complex and demanding, these relationships have all too often fallen by the way side. Neither facilitators nor parents have enough time to get to know one another and establish working relationship on behalf of children. The result is misunderstanding, mistrust and a lack of respect, so that, when a child falls behind, teachers blame the parents and parents blame the teachers.

At the same time, our society has created artificial distinction about the roles that parents and teachers should play in a young person's development. We tend to think that schools should stick to teaching academics and that home is the place where children's moral and emotional development should take place. Yet children don't stop learning about values and relationships when they enter a classroom, nor do they cease learning academics—and attitudes about learning - when they are at home or elsewhere in their community. They constantly observe how the significant adults in their lives treat one another, how decisions are made and executed and how problems are solved.

All the experiences children have, both in and out of school, help shape their sense that someone cares about them, their feelings of self worth and competency, their understanding of the world around them, and their belief about where they fit into the scheme of things. The idea is to develop and nurture a partnership between home and school who together can make a commitment of time and energy to support and guide our children.

Often I face situations where a child is left helpless because the gap between home and school just doesn't seem to bridge. He does not love his academics because emotionally he is not getting the anchor from the two ends in a complementary way. Friends, please be sensitive to this need of our child and work collaboratively with each other. We at school have created opportunities by way of Parenting Sessions, PTM's, Grandparents forum where parents and teachers can learn that they both have children's best interest at heart. They become partners in ensuring a happy childhood for the children and creating experiences which will ultimately make him a happy adult.

Parents can make a valuable contribution by sharing first hand information about work, hobbies and childhood experiences either in person or via a computer network. The work taken up in school can be supplemented by sitting with the child, listening to his/her's experiences in school, helping them with the activities or just simply talking to them.

This level of parent involvement allows parents and teachers to work together in respectful and mutually supportive ways, creating an environment in which understanding, trust and respect can flourish. At the same time children get consistent messages from important adults in their lives. When children observe that home and school are engaged in a respectful partnership for their benefit, they are likely to develop more positive attitudes about school

and achieve more, compared to situations in which school and home are seen as being worlds apart Six guidelines to develop effective home school partnership:-

- **BE A PARTNER WITH THE TEACHER**

Your child will benefit most if you and the teacher work together as parents in your child's education. Some parents have had bad experiences when they were at school in the past. Because of this, some parents approach the school with a defensive or angry attitude. However this can interfere the communication channel and does not help the child. It is best to believe that the school and the teacher care about your child. Begin your communication with a positive attitude and a willingness to be a partner with your teacher.

- **GET COMFORTABLE WITHIN THE SCHOOL AND WITH THE TEACHER**

Some parents feel uncomfortable in school and talking with teachers. Below are some ideas that you can do to help you feel comfortable at school.

- Talk to your teacher separately.
- Attend Parenting Sessions and Parents Teacher Meet regularly.
- Talk to other people who spend time in school.

- **FEEL FREE TO MAKE THE FIRST CONTACT WITH THE TEACHER**

A major problem with communication between parents and teachers is the failure of either the parent or the teacher to make the first move. Teachers have reported that some parents do not take the lead to communicate by phone or in person, even when the school provided opportunities such as Parentings, Parent's Teacher Meetings. Similarly, parents feel that problems in communication are due to teachers failing to begin the process of communicating with them. However, good communication is the responsibility of both parents and teachers. As a parent, you should not feel that the teacher should always be the one to

make the first contact. You should feel comfortable with starting off the communication with your child's teacher and that you have the right to do so. This is important when your child has had problems in the past.

- **COMMUNICATE WITH THE TEACHER EARLY**

Another major communication problem reported by both parents and teacher is not communicating early enough when a student was having difficulty in school. Often you can anticipate a problem. Your child may have had difficulties in the past. Your child may tell you about a problem. You may also notice some problems with class work or home activity. If you suspect a problem, contact the teacher immediately. Do not wait. Also, do not think that just because the teacher has not contacted you that this means that there is no important information to communicate to you about your child's education. At the latest, you should contact your child's teacher at the mid-way point of the session.

- **COMMUNICATE OFTEN**

An additional major communication problem often reported by parents and teachers is the failure to communicate frequently and regularly. Regular and ongoing feedback from the teacher will allow you to better provide the specific help your child needs. Three things to keep in mind when planning regular communication with your child's teacher are discussed below.

How to communicate. There is a variety of ways to communicate regularly with the teacher, including face-to-face meetings, phone calls, or through written notes. You will need to work together with the teacher to decide on which method of communication would be the easiest and most helpful.

What to communicate. It is important for the parent and teacher to discuss and agree on what concerns or problems need to be monitored. It is important to be specific about this information. Some examples include:

specific information about activities done at home, the child's level of participation, or the percentage of work completed in class.

How often to communicate. How often you need to communicate with the teacher will depend on the severity of the problem. For more serious problems, you may need to have daily contact with the teacher.

Follow through with what you said you would do

Another major communication problem reported by both parents and teachers is not doing what was agreed upon. If you told your child's teacher you would communicate in a certain way or do a specific school or home related task, do your best to follow through with what you said you would do. For example, if you agreed that you would check your child's activity, be sure to do this consistently. Be sure to let the teacher know if you are unable to do what was agree upon.

To ensure that the Home School team is a winner here are the important five C's : coordination, cooperation, school and home complementing each other, communication and collaboration between the two worlds. When teachers and parents share common goals of bringing up children the journey of parenting is more enjoyable and satisfying.

Wishing you and your family a Very Happy New Year.

Anupama Chand