Beyond the Newsletter:

Working with Families in the Elementary Classroom

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What do you think?
Why is family communication important?
Turn and talk to a neighbor:

- Why is this important for the student?
- For the parent?
- For the teacher?

Why is family communication important?
Research says...

- Family involvement that is linked to student learning has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement.
- Family involvement that supports student learning at home is linked to improved student achievement.
- Families of all cultural backgrounds and education and income levels can have a positive influence on their children’s learning.
- Family involvement efforts that recognize cultural and class differences, address family needs, and build on families’ strengths are effective in engaging diverse families.

Henderson and Mapp (2002)

Why is family communication important?
Why is family communication important?
At your seat, use the Post-it notes to write down some of the family-school communication ideas that you’ve seen or participated in this past year.

When you have several ideas written down, place them on the appropriate wall:

- **“Hmmmmm...???”** – ideas that are interesting, but you have questions/concerns
- **“Best of the best!”** – ideas that you absolutely love and would like to use somehow

What have you seen?
As a parent, I hate the super long stapled documents explaining boring stuff (like test scores - classroom routines and rules are fine), I also don't like "helpful" documents like: how to read to your kid, how to feed your kid nutritious food, etc.

I am with I hate the "extra tips". They feel condescending and belittle my job as a parent.

Like · Reply · June 20 at 10:58am

I'm not a teacher and I agree about the tips. Do not like them.

Off the top of my head, I appreciate the updates in all the methods you mentioned. I like to know how they are doing on a day to day basis, areas in which they are doing well, areas that they could use some extra help, how they are interacting with peers.

Thoughts from parents
Thoughts from parents

I loved my granddaughter's teacher's Facebook group page. She posted pictures galore and notifications about projects coming up, programs, and field trips. Very informative especially since the papers went home to two separate households and sometimes one parent would see a paper notice and the other wouldn't.

Unlike · Reply · 1 · June 20 at 12:13pm

I love newsletters, printed or emailed. I enjoy it all really. A quick email has alerted me to possible issues and also given me some encouraging info about my girls.

I like the calendars, plans, and overview of what is being done in the classroom. On a more individual level, I wish we got a word based description on how the kid is doing. The tests are one thing but I'd rather hear how my kid is doing with the process.
Beginning of Year (before school starts)
-Meet with all parents before school starts to go over behavior and academic expectations in person and give them a hand out about it.
-Email all parents I have emails for to introduce myself. Parents I do not have emails for, I call.
-I would like to do home visits before the start of the year, but I do not ever get my class list early enough.

During the School Year
-Literacy Connection Journals*
-Emails
-Classroom management plan / Reset Sheet
-Literacy Backpacks (go home on Fridays)*
-Family Message Journals*
-The photography project has been a big hit to start conversations with families, too.
-Newsletters (1 page only, goes home on Fridays, only includes what we are working on, important activities coming up, etc etc)
-Classroom website (which has pictures, expectations, standards, a blog, favorite books, etc)
-Classroom Kidblog where parents can blog back about what we are doing
-"Good News Notes" - similar to "STARS" kids get at King, but these are totally random and not "earned" - they are given at the end of the day or at random times when I see a kid being awesome.
-I never wait to talk to parents at p/t conferences. I had 100% show up during my fall conferences this past year (and about 85% in the spring) which is totally crazy for parents, but I believe I am getting better at making positive experiences for my at risk families).

Thoughts from parents
phOLKS Lore: Learning from Photographs, Families, and Children

One example...
In closing, try to work toward:

- Creating opportunities for students and families to learn together at home
- Establishing respectful two-way communication
- Learning together as families and educators.
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- Learning together as families and educators.

Thank you for coming! 😊
Great ideas

I plan on using this idea in my classroom.

- Take home note for individual student
- "Today I worked hard at _______"
- After HW: child wrote about hw experience, what able to do on her own
- Parent-teacher Conferences
- Presentation night
- Monthly Newsletters sent home
- Blog/Classroom website
- Weekly News letter
- Emails
Great ideas

- Parent-teacher conferences
- Open door policy visits encouraged
- A parent came in to talk about his job (relevant to curriculum)
- Weekly newsletter
- Emails
- Parent communications often
- Talk with them when it's for a cupcake day, party, or event
- Calling home
- Paper/Digital Newsletters
- Class dojo
- Twitter w/ pictures
Hmmm....?

I have questions or concerns about these ideas.

I need to think more on these....
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