

Effective Communication With Parents:

Teachers can establish rapport with parents by using effective communication skills: A good partnership takes two, so parents also need to work on their skills. Effective communication takes time, is honest, and is open. Good communicators listen, rephrase and avoid criticizing and acting superior. Teachers who are good communicators:

- Give your total attention to the speaker. Establish eye contact and clearly demonstrate by body language that their interest is focused on what is being said.
- Restate the parents concerns. Clarify what has been said and try to discern the speaker's meaning and feeling.
- Avoid closed responses or answering as a critic, judge, or moralist.
- Show respect for the other person. Recognize their concern, opinions, and questions are significant to mutual understanding and communication.
- Recognize the parent's feelings. How much can you discuss with the parent?
- Tailor discussions to fit the parent's ability to handle the situation. Do not touch off the fuse of a parent who might not be able to handle a child's difficulties.
- Emphasize that concerns are no one's fault. Teacher and parent have to work the problem together to help the child. Use concerns as forums for understanding one another.
- Remember that no one ever wins an argument. Calmly, quietly, enthusiastically discuss the good points of the child before you bring up any concerns.
- Protect the parents' egos. Don't blame or make the parents believe that they are the blame for their child's deficiencies. Focus on plans for the future.
- Focus on one issue at a time. Be specific about the child's progress or other concerns.
- Listen. Hear the feeling and meaning of each message. Rephrase and check out the message to be sure that you received it correctly.

