



Coaches Corner: Building Relationships

Part 2 of 3: Families

This is a 3 part article:

1. Building Relationships with your colleagues
2. Building Relationships with families
3. Building Relationships with children

Spring is time for new growth and new beginnings, a wonderful time to reconnect with your families. Planning a Family Get Together is the perfect way to demonstrate your appreciation of their trust in you. Whether the families are close friends or new to your program, it is essential to show you care for them as a whole. Meeting and mingling with the teachers can help ease family's anxieties and validate their decision to enroll their children. It will re-establish how you are all connected through your community (your program).

Tips for building strong relationships with your families:

- ❖ Establish strong communications with parents from the beginning.
 - A monthly or quarterly letter from the director and/or teachers to create a personal connection. It also reinforces the value that the school is adding to students' lives.
 - Parent/teacher conferences offer opportunities to exchange information, develop relationships and share the child's successes.
 - Home visits provide a peek into the family's life creating a strong bond between the family and the teacher.
- ❖ Support family involvement.
 - Create a parent ambassadors program. Pairing current family members with new families can help new families feel comfortable in the classroom community.
 - A special event for new parents provides an opportunity to forge new partnerships, impart valuable information about school policies & procedures and how families can be involved.
 - Open door policy & volunteering opportunities.
- ❖ See the family as a customer with whom you establish a professional relationship and partnership.
 - Patience, skill in direct problem-solving, powers of observation, and the ability to defuse anger and anxiety help support both families and staff. This high level of professionalism is valued in teachers.
- ❖ Outline mutual expectations.
 - Developing a "contract" for parents and school personnel supports behavior expectations and establishes the baseline for professional and courteous exchanges between parents and staff.
- ❖ Help parents handle dissatisfaction directly.
 - The first avenue of recourse should always be the person with whom they disagree (i.e. parent to teacher).
 - If the conflict cannot be resolved, it is then appropriate to move up the ladder of authority as necessary.
- ❖ Develop a strong parent association.
 - The association or committee can host occasional "town meetings" with parents, faculty, and school leaders to share ideas. Scheduling meetings at times when parents are likely to be at the school already—such as on back to school night or before a recital—can increase participation.
- ❖ Host small group meetings to solicit feedback.
 - Involve a balance of new parents and returning parents in meetings.
 - The leader can ask the group questions such as: "What are we doing well?" "Where do we need to improve?" The "testimonials" will build loyalty and enthusiasm among the newest members of the community.
 - Some schools regularly survey the entire parent body to ask specific questions about satisfaction and expectations. These surveys can be springboards for improvement.
- ❖ Attend to the needs of parents whose children are leaving your school.
 - Produce a letter or a brochure that outlines the predictable anxieties both parents and children may feel as they move from one comfortable setting (your school) to another.
 - Host a meeting or event for these families (parents and students) describing how to manage the transition.
 - Have recent "graduates" who navigated the transition speak at these events. You will be able to highlight the areas where your school excels and gather information about areas that could be improved.

Source: <http://www.advanc-ed.org/source/nurturing-positive-relationships-parents>

