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## In the Real World: Positive Communication with Parents

One principal shares how she continuously keeps the lines of communication open with parents.

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by Sharon Weber

Ongoing positive communication with parents sometimes gets lost at this point in the year. I think that we as administrators so often talk with parents only when there is a problem that parents are intimidated and afraid to contact us with concerns (or praise) that they may have. Here are a few activities that I'm incorporating that seem to be making a positive difference.

To keep an open line of communication, I invite the PTO officers from my three schools to a luncheon at my home during the summer. I cook a meal and dessert and we sit and plan the events for the year. This helps the various PTOs network, conduct joint assemblies to reduce costs, and discuss field trips. During the year, I meet with the PTO officers often and attend all of their meetings to stay in touch with active parents, answer questions, give upcoming dates of importance, and share all of the positive public relations I can about the schools.

I also incorporated an Eat With Your Child Day at one of my schools. We selected a day for parents to come and eat lunch with their children during the lunch period and sent home invitations for the event, along with the cost per adult. The day of the luncheon, parents signed in at a special table with two greeters and then went to their child's classroom for a few minutes before lunch. The students were beaming as they walked their parents through the building to the cafeteria, and the parents seemed to enjoy the lunch, decorative placemats made by the children, and music performed by our instrumental music teacher. Out of 220 students, more than 190 were represented by an adult. After the luncheon, a parent called me to let me know what a wonderful time she had. I was thrilled about the call. So often the extra things we do go unnoticed, and I was glad that she took the time to let me know.

On a different note, we had a parent with a teacher concern. After the initial call from the parent, I spoke with the teacher and student separately. Each week for the next month I took a moment to call the parent to ask how things were going. Mom was happy that I checked back with her, and I haven't heard anything since.

Parents now have a variety of choices when it comes to schooling their children. Public school administrators must ask themselves on a regular basis about the quality of their programs for students and the contact they are making with parents and the community. Our administrative team is currently enjoying a book study on School Customer Service by Tracey DeBruyn.

I'd like to know how you are addressing the issue of parental involvement and keeping in contact with parents in your building. Replies to this column will be printed in the next edition.

I hope you have an enjoyable, relaxing, and safe holiday season. I look forward to hearing from you on this important topic.

Signing off from the educational "real world,"

Sharon Weber

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