

# Communication is the key to a strong parent-teacher team

Research shows that parent involvement in education is connected to student success at school. When teachers and parents work together, the results can be powerful.

But parent-teacher relationships are like any other--they require good communication. At the start of the school year, make a point to:

- Set the tone. It's natural to have questions when the school year begins. To build a strong parent-teacher foundation, let the teacher know that you appreciate her work. Ask key questions respectfully. Show support for your child and the class, and encourage the teacher to keep in touch.
- Be positive. When you talk with the teacher, enjoy hearing about your child's strengths. But also prepare to hear about weaknesses or misbehavior. Remember to react helpfully. You and the teacher both want your child to do well. Addressing struggles is the only way to find solutions.
- Role-play. Some parents are shy about talking with the teacher. If this describes you, imagine meeting with her. What would you say? How would you respond to questions? Practice with someone you trust. Take turns presenting both points of view. Still worried? Using email may put you at ease.
- Choose words carefully. Make polite requests rather than demands. A helpful tip is to use the word *we* instead of *you*. ("How can we stay in touch to help Chloe?" is less off-putting than "You should tell me if Chloe is falling behind.") The teacher isn't your opponent; she's your teammate.

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