



Communicating with Parents

During the Year

- Parents are often your best ally. A call home about homework or discipline problems may settle matters quickly (Best, however, to give the student an opportunity to fix the problem beforehand).
- Make a “good news” call. Select a student with average achievement whose recent work is showing some promise. Call home and deliver the good news. Both you and the parent will feel good. The student will love you, and the school gets some very welcome PR.
- Invitations to parent’s nights are useful. Send them home with students. If they don’t make it, you at least made the effort. A phone call is best for those parents you really feel you must see.
- Make appointments with parents outside the Parent Night schedule, and consider the value of having the student in that meeting.
- Be open to students joining interviews you have with parents. Let the suggestion, however, come from the parents.
- Older students will want to deal with you directly.

Parent Interviews

- Parent nights can be busy. A student “secretary” can ask for parent names and fill in that information at the top of a sheet and give it to you as you are interviewing. With this at the desk you can see how many parents are waiting and you have the name of the next parents as they approach you to begin. If the school doesn’t use such help, nothing prevents you from setting it up for yourself.
- Stand and greet. Ask for and clarify names. Write them down. You do not want to convey the impression you are indifferent or tired. Do you have some positive anecdote or observation about the student with which to begin? Are you aware of some extra-curricular involvement to be appreciated?
- Sometimes parents want you to listen rather than talk. Find out which way to go at

the outset. Try as an opener: "Do you have some specific questions we should talk about?" The response will tell you whether they have come with some specific issues, or whether you will decide on the direction - or whether they have come to fill you in on important background.

- The issue is not always marks. Sometimes parents simply want to know the person who is a subject of conversation at home. Sometimes they want you to know they are interested and ready to support you.
- If it's the mark, focus on both strengths and areas for improvement. If you keep a record sheet on individual students you will be best prepared to speak more specifically. (See attached individual student record sheet). You likely know the student's expressive abilities best; begin there:

Written work

- To what degree does content show understanding?
- To what degree have assignments demonstrated ability to organize?
- Is writing skill there? Errors?

Should you ever re-mark something? If the work is something significant for a senior student, it is important to establish a reasonable appeal process without feeling threatened. You can change your mind, and demonstrate a fair and open attitude. At the same time, the best time to avoid problems is BEFORE submission, and rather than re-viewing an assignment, you might want to demonstrate the same fairness and openness by offering to pre-view the next assignment.

Oral Work

Be ready to address the situation in which a student's oral understanding outstrips his/her ability to show understanding in writing. This often happens. Intelligence seems to reside but won't come out in written submissions and may also be stunted when oral presentations require particular structures.

- Does classroom participation indicate a good oral understanding?
- If so, can you speculate as to why that is missing from written submissions?
- Do oral presentations indicate good understanding?
- If so, evidence is mounting of some problem in either responsible approach or basic ability with written language.

Reading

- Is it your impression that the student is on top of work?
- Ask if there is evidence of work at home? On reading? On writing?
- Avoid being defensive. Parents will seldom accuse. Even if they do, keep your

attention on A) clarification of problems B) inviting parents to consider solutions with you

- Have paper and pencil ready to keep notes. (See attached sheet) The key thing to note is whether there is follow-up expected. You may need to review some work with the student, or simply hold a conference to gain further insight from the student.
- Parents often ask what they can do at home to assist. See the attached checklist as a starting point for one you might want to add to, or modify.
- Defer a decision if you can't see a positive one emerging. Gather information. Say you need to consult with the student, or with colleagues or administration and you will then call.
- Learn to watch the time. Forewarn parents as the interview begins that "it's a busy night" and have some ways of closing. (e.g. "I see our time's up." " Thanks for coming." "Can I call you within the week to finish this discussion?" "So, what I need to do is:.....")

Parent Interviews

Date: _____

<u>Student Name:</u>	<u>Parent Name(s):</u>
	<u>Phone:</u>
<u>Notes:</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Review work <input type="checkbox"/> Conference with student <input type="checkbox"/> Phone home	
<u>Student Name:</u>	<u>Parent Name(s):</u>
	<u>Phone:</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Review work <input type="checkbox"/> Conference with student <input type="checkbox"/> Phone home	
<u>Student Name:</u>	<u>Parent Name(s):</u>
	<u>Phone:</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Review work <input type="checkbox"/> Conference with student <input type="checkbox"/> Phone home	

What can we do to help with English?

Helping adolescents with work at school should be more a matter of coaching, listening, supporting, and directing them to resources. It can be problematic to intervene too closely. Consider making the focus on whether or not they seem to know where to seek help beyond you. This indirect help can be much more successful (and appreciated) than direct intervention.

- See that there is time for work to be done.
- See that there is a reasonably pleasant place for work to be done
- Take an interest in what homework has been assigned. Call the teacher with any concerns.
- Encourage reading generally.
- Ensure there are newspapers and magazines and some books in the house.
- Be a reader. Read and discuss things you have read.
- Offer to proof read written work, but use questions as your main means to comment.
- Offer to read written work, or listen to oral work and ask questions.
- Steer your son or daughter to help at the school.
- Take every opportunity to talk about current affairs. Lots of success in English is dependent on the student being sufficiently aware of what is going on (or what was going on) in culture.
- Talk about movies. They do some things quite similar to books.
- Find opportunities to listen to your son or daughter read aloud. Do they seem to have difficulty? Can you show them how you solve reading problems?
- An inability to read school texts is a serious issue and needs immediate attention. You can read material with your son or daughter to discover what degree of support they seem to need. If they need lots of support, contact the school.
- Is time management an issue? Can you help set up working goals for a month at a time?
- Find some on-line sites for supporting written work.
- Does the school have any on-line help for homework?
- Is some tutorial assistance needed?

Course: _____ Year: _____ Term: _____ STUDENT NAME: _____

	Key Assignments	Results	Strengths / Areas for Improvement
WRITING			
READING			
LANGUAGE			
MEDIA			
FINAL 30%			