



Growing Classroom Culture through Parent Partnerships with Robyn Burlew

Lecture 4: The Basis of
Partnership with
Parents: Under the
Church, Apprenticing
Young Humans

Outline:

Partnership with Parents

- The more clarity that we can get around the idea of partnership, the stronger that partnership will be and the more fruitful it will be in the lives of our students.

Foundations of Partnership

- What is the partnership? We are partnering with the home in apprenticing young humans in what it means to be made in the image of God.
- The church is a full partner in that process as well.
- The school is not the primary leg of the stool that supports the raising of a child.
- **What is the task of our partnership? What does it mean to be partners?** A partnership is a relationship of cooperation and mutual investment that is aimed at a common goal.
- The partners bring different resources to the partnership.
 - A parent partners with a Latin teacher. A parent brings more than finances, but finances are part of it.
- Partners bring different perspectives.
- Partners face the same direction.
- In reality we can have a relationship that is more economic, legal, and transactional, but we use partnership as a cover term. We don't want this kind of consumer relationship.
 - For most schools, there is a contract.
 - The relationship is formalized, but it is not primarily economic it is partnership.
- Partnership is not a negation of expertise of the partners. Teacher in second grade is an expert of second graders.
 - The expertise that the parent bring is that they know their individual child in way that the teacher will not know them.
 - The partnership will bring this knowledge to bear towards a common goal.



- Partnership is not a euphemism for “you serve me.”
 - There is a temptation on both sides for this.
 - Parents can expect that the teacher is some sort of hired hand dispensing knowledge.
 - Teachers can expect that parents are going to deliver obedient, well-rested, and prepared student to their classroom each morning.

The foundation of the partnership depends on some basic principles.

- Your mission statement, statement of faith, and Portrait of a Graduate must be a living documents in your school that guide you. Talk about them often.
- **Shared and agreed upon goals** become the nonnegotiable aspects of the partnership. This is what we come back to as our shared goal. If we agree on these goals, then we should move forward.
- We can all agree to disagree on the 10% as long we agree on 90% of the goals.
- The agreed upon goals are the big rocks that have to go into the container first.
- The school must be proactive in talking about the Portrait of the Graduate as a shared goal. Our schools cannot move students toward the Portrait of the Graduate if homes are pushing in the other direction.
- A classical education at school is dependent on a classically-oriented home. They have to be facing the same way.
- As a school, we need to name the direct threats to the Portrait of the Graduate.
 - Screens, social media, habits of texting
- **Charity:** We need to default to giving one another the benefit of the doubt. We shouldn't be living “on the trigger” of criticism.
 - Accept complaints and do not assume that a person is attacking you personally.
 - At the beginning of the year, perhaps say: “I won't believe everything I hear about you, if you don't believe everything you hear about me.”
 - Reports from students are not always reliable.
 - Resist the temptation to assign malicious intent.
- **Assumed Trust:** We are fed the idea that the mother must defend her child against the system and the teacher must defend against parents who make unreasonable demands. We must assume that we can trust one another.
- **Honest Communication:**
 - Tell the truth in small doses and early. Don't save things for one big conversation.
 - You as a teacher should not know anything important about a student that you do not quickly share with the parents.
 - Do not save up issues for parent-teacher conferences. It is better to have built up the relationship.