



School Culture: Full Lesson Tour in Community, Virtue, & Education with Robyn Burlew

Lecture 11: Partnership
with Parents:
Communication and
Peacetime
Strengthening

Outline:

Communication and Peacetime Strengthening

- Invest early in the year in ways that help parents know you as a person. The real curriculum is the teacher.
- Use paper to communicate about class logistics. Use time with parents in the room to help them get to know you. They need to know who is with their children all day.
- It strengthens the partnership between home and school if we offer to parents some ways in which they can talk to their children.
- Look for ways to give positive anecdotes about what has happened in your classroom.
- Give parents timely feedback on student work. This is hard. If you are not keeping up with your grading, you need to talk with your administrator or a more experienced teacher. Am I assigning too much? Are there other ways of assessing or assigning things?
- In general, what you want to be thinking early on is, “How can I invest such that I give everyone the benefit of the doubt.”
- Parents must already be confident that you know and love their children. They must understand that you are fully committed to the child’s long-term well-being.

Messages

- Send messages to one another of various sorts in various ways. Build an appropriate bridge for the message that is being sent. Build a strong bridge that can bear the weight of heavy messages.
- Email is great for messages that don’t have much weight.
- If your message is, “Your child is falling behind in learning to read,” is a heavy message that needs the vehicle of a phone call or a face-to-face meeting. It is also much better delivered within an established relationships.
- Sometimes we do not realize that the messages that we’re delivering are of the sort that kill parent’s dreams for their children. We need to be careful that we are not too cavalier with these messages.



We can have some practices that can strengthen the partnership between home and school.

- Clearly states expectations and naming the threats to the partnerships.
- Most of the stresses and breaks in the relationships between home and school are when the expectations are not aligned. It behooves the school leaders to continually refine that ways that we communicate with parents.
- Every teacher has a role in the process of parent education. As a kindergarten teacher you must have an idea of what is happening at your school from K-12.
- We need to acknowledge the ways that our own personal histories play into this partnership. Understand that most of us who wanted to be teachers and were called into teaching come out of a place of very positive memories of schooling and viewing the school. Not every parent has that same background. Parents default stance can be adversarial.
- Society gives us messages that parent have to defend their children against the outside world.
- We expect that we are going to be correcting, challenging, and offering a different perspective to one another. We do that with the child's best interest in mind.
- Our culture has added a few extra burdens to this partnership between school and home.
 - We want to keep our children from struggle. Our culture can feed the idea that the students need to have the path smoothed before them.
 - Culture tells us that our feelings rule us. We are going to have to choose to not act this way ourselves.
 - We also have come to think in "them" and "us" terms.
 - All of us have our own idolatries. We can idolize the idea of being right. Families can idolize their children in various ways.
- We need to find ways to put it on the table so that we can all navigate partnerships in ways that fruitful as we mutually invest towards these common shared goals.