

IMPROVING PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION  
AT THE KINDERGARTEN LEVEL

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In the past there has been very little research concerning parent-teacher communication at the elementary level and its possible effects on the child and the parent. Many articles supporting the need for good parent-teacher relations exist, but few study the communication's effectiveness. Few parents realize the importance of a kindergarten education. They often seem unaware of its complete scope. Evidence of this exists in the fact that until recently many states did not have public kindergartens.

Before beginning an intensive parent-teacher communication program, research was done in search of similar attempts and in search of suggestions and ideas for a communication program. Very little was found in the former area, but in the latter area several parent-child activities in schools and parent-teacher relations in general have been discussed in books and magazines.

The major portion of a research program involving parents centers around their cooperation. Interests often must be stimulated, some groups of parents requiring more stimulation than others. Various means are used to achieve such a goal during the first two months of school, and continuous motivation and encouragement from the school is necessary to maintain this interest in many parents throughout the year. The teacher should assume the responsibility since

parents are often too busy or too unsure of themselves to take these first steps toward good parent-teacher relations.

The purposes of this parent-teacher communication program at the kindergarten level are stated as follows:

1. To determine whether different forms of communication with parents had an effect upon their understanding of their child's kindergarten program.
2. To determine in what ways, if any, did the child benefit from this parent-teacher communication.
3. To determine which techniques appeared to be the most successful with this particular sampling.

The school and the community is then described, taking special note of the fact that the children in the sample attended kindergarten for a full-day session, rather than the typical half-day session common in most public schools. Also, the fact that the school was in a rural area might have had an effect on the results.

When explaining the parent-teacher communication program in detail, special note is taken of the fact that the special services of a home-school coordinator existed for the use of the teachers. The home-school coordinator was always on hand to answer questions concerning different families in the community and their particular home situation.

The following is a partial list of some parent involvement activities and techniques used during the school year to develop a complete parent-teacher communication program: monthly newsletters concerning curriculum and special events, which in later months included a brief personal

report on each child's strengths and weaknesses; an informal introductory open house for parents early in the year; the use of an opinion questionnaire and an informational questionnaire to acquire ideas concerning parent opinions of the school and where their own interests lie; parent conferences, including a child conference prior to the parent conference; parent reading program in which parents were invited twice a month to read to the class; baking projects once a month where parents worked with the children as an instructor during the mixing phase of the baking project; home visits; parent-child puppet making project; and a parent meeting with the first grade teachers as a conclusion to the year of communication.

Through the use of the fall-parent-opinion-questionnaire, the spring-parent-opinion-questionnaire and the child-opinion-questionnaire, conclusions as to the effectiveness of the program are drawn and discussed completely. Some detailed examples of certain instances of extensive parent-teacher communication are also included.

Developed within this research is a workable plan for achieving good parent-teacher relations. Step-by-step plans for encouraging parents to become involved in their child's education are included, plans that could easily be revised to meet the needs of other communities and parent groups. Ideas for communicating each child's progress to his parents are also included. Suggestions for future studies in this area are

made, taking into consideration the fact that most kindergartens are half-day sessions.