

**North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
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Six Types of Parental Involvement

Communicating

Communicating: Designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programs and children's progress.

Communicating – Type 2

The second type of parental involvement is communicating. Communicating activities include school-to-home and home-to-school communications about the district, school, and classroom programs as well as student progress. These two way communications:

- Increase understanding between school and home.
- Foster cooperation between school and home.
- Show students that their parents and teacher are working together to help them succeed.
- Encourage families to provide reactions, ideas, and preferences to the school as well as ask questions about student progress and the school's programs.

Sample Activities

Examples of activities schools could conduct to promote communicating include, but are not limited to:

- Scheduling parent-teacher-student conferences to establish student learning goals for the year.
- Listening to parents tell us about their children's strengths and how they learn.
- Following the "Rule of Seven" offering at least seven different ways that parents and community members can learn about what is happening in the school and comment on it.
- Teachers having ready access to telephones to communicate with parents during/after the school day.
- Staff members sending home positive messages about students.
- Making efforts to communicate with fathers.
- Staff members making home visits.
- Parents knowing the telephone numbers and email addresses of school staff members and the times teachers are available to take phone calls from parents.
- Involving families in student award and recognition events.
- Encouraging and making provisions for staff members to communicate with parents about the child's progress several times each semester.
- Communicating the school's mission and expectations for students to parents.
- The school has a homework hotline or other kind of telephone support system.
- Providing parents with structured ways to comment on the school's communications, for example, with mailed, phone, or take-home surveys.
- Having staff members available to assist and support parents in their interactions with the school (i.e., home-school liaisons).
- Sending home communications regarding:

- student academic progress,
 - meetings at school,
 - how parents can be involved in student activities,
 - Parent Teacher Association,
 - student discipline,
 - child development,
 - the curriculum,
 - how parents can be involved as volunteers,
 - how parents can be involved in school governance,
 - how parents can help with homework and encourage learning at home,
 - community resources available to families,
 - how parents can communicate with school staff, and
 - the school's philosophy of learning.
- ❑ Speaking to parents (does not include leaving messages on answering machines) if students are having academic difficulties or causing classroom disruptions **before** a crisis occurs.
 - ❑ Providing copies of school textbooks and publications about the school to the public library.
 - ❑ Having school related information available on a website.

Challenges and Solutions

Just because communications are distributed to parents does not mean that they will be successful. Schools must ensure that all communications are clear and understandable. Schools must make a conscious effort to remove the “educational jargon” and use words that are meaningful and understandable to all parents. Another challenge is that it is difficult to determine which families are receiving the communications and which are not. Therefore, schools must develop effective two-way channels of communication so families can easily contact the school.

Documentation and Evaluation

No matter the number or type of activities a school is implementing to assist with communicating, it is crucial that these activities are adequately documented and evaluated. Documenting activities may include reserving copies of materials distributed, compiling, and listing information communicated to families, evidencing ways the communication is two-way, etc. Each communication activity conducted should be evaluated by the school. The evaluation should also seek input from the parents and community on whether or not the communication method was effective. Evaluation is crucial as this is often the determining factor of whether or not the activity should continue, be revised, or be dismissed all together.

Resources

Resources used to develop this document include:

- ❑ Epstein, J., Sanders, M., Simon, B., Salinas, K., Jansorn, N., and Voorhis, F. (2002). *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* (2nd ed.). California: Corwin Press, Inc.
- ❑ National Network of Partnership Schools. (n.d.). *Epstein's Six Types of Parent Involvement*. Retrieved August 21, 2007 from www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/sixtypes.htm.