Activity 2.1: Mapping Parent-Teacher Contacts and Communications

Time: 45 minutes

Purpose

To discuss the levels of communicative expectation in your school by exploring the what, when, where, how and why of school and family contacts and communications.

Materials Needed

- Attached worksheet
- Writing utensils

Roles

1. Facilitator: Explain the activity and lead the follow-up discussion.
2. Participants: Work in small groups and decide upon answers collectively.

Activity

1. The facilitator will divide participants into small groups of 4 to 6.
2. Each participant should receive a copy of the "Mapping Parent-Teacher Contacts and Communications" sheet.
3. Direct each group to select one person to serve as the scribe. Explain that each group will decide together on an appropriate response to each question on the "Mapping Parent-Teacher Contacts and Communications" sheet. The scribe will record this answer on his/her sheet.
4. Instruct each group to calculate the score for their worksheet and discuss the follow-up questions at the end of the worksheet.
5. Apply the follow-up questions to the room as a whole. Point out any trends you notice.

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Mapping Parent-Teacher Contacts and Communications

What

A. School-family communications tend to focus on:
   1. Student problems and misbehavior
   2. General news about the class
   3. Progress in specific problems areas
   4. Overall student progress

   Other: _____

When

B. Teachers, counselors, or advisors are expected to communicate with families:
   1. When there is a problem
   2. At parent-teacher conferences every nine weeks
   3. At least once a month if the student is struggling
   4. At least once a month with every family

   Other: _____

C. When do parents and teachers have face-to-face contact (besides parent-teacher conferences)?
   1. Some teachers attend PTA meetings and other events for families
   2. All teachers attend at least one family-oriented activity each semester
   3. Teachers greet families before and after school
   4. Teachers routinely meet one-on-one or in small groups with families

   Other: _____

Where

D. At which places may school staff and family members encounter each other?
   1. Only in the school and only on parent-teacher night
   2. In the school during a variety of activities including back-to-school night, concerts and science fairs
   3. In the school, at events, and on any day, following ground rules for classroom visitation
   4. In the school, on any day; within the community, at community events and activities; during home visits

   Other: _____

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How

E. How often do teachers send home materials that will help families work with their children, such as learning kits or interactive homework assignments?

1. Rarely
2. Maybe once a month
3. It varies by teacher
4. Every week

Other: _____

F. How is student work shared with families?

1. Our school displays the work of top students only
2. Families can come to school and see work on the bulletin boards
3. Teachers send home student work about once a month
4. Student work goes home every week; families and teachers provide input regarding progress

Other: _____

Why

G. Why are communications with families initiated?

1. To inform families of general school events
2. To discuss problem behaviors or academic difficulties
3. To inform families of behavior and curriculum expectations
4. To inform families of progress on a regular basis, with expectations explained and positive developments highlighted

Other: _____

Add up your score and give yourself an extra credit point for each "other" response the moves your school towards open communication with families. Indicate the score below. The higher the number, the more open your communications with families. Pat yourself on the back if your score is higher than 18. If not, consider what steps you could take to increase open communication.

Total Score: _____

Follow-Up Questions:

- What strengths do you note regarding your school's implementation of family contacts and communications?
- What areas of growth can be identified?
- What creative interventions are being initiated to contact and communicate with families?
- What action steps might you follow to increase contacts and communications?