

## Two-Way Communication

### **Purpose**

To identify ways to enhance current two-way communication strategies to share information with family members in an effort to support student learning.

### **Materials**

- Charts – Sharing Information (available at end of activity)
- Half and Half Letters (available at end of activity, needed for group 2 – two-way communication about the classroom and school)

### **Roles**

1. Facilitator leads discussion.
2. Participants provide ideas and suggestions.

### **Activity**

1. Divide participants into 2 groups – Group 1 is to focus on two-way communication about individual students. Group 2 is to focus on two-way communication about the classroom and school. Assign a facilitator for each of the groups. (Note: Participants may be divided into smaller groups, if necessary. Simply assign half the groups to focus on individual students and half on the classroom and school.)
2. Each group should receive copies of the partially completed charts. Ask the groups to review their assigned charts and independently reflect on the information presented.
3. Each group will now enhance their assigned chart by adding strategies and/or types of information to share. Be sure at least one person from each group is recording the comments that are shared.
4. Ask each group to report out their “top three” strategies and types of information to share.

Module 2: Communicating Effectively  
Activity 2.3

<b>Sharing Information With Parents and Family Members About Individual Students</b>	
<b>Strategies for Sharing Information</b>	<b>Types of Information to Share</b>
<p>Get to Know You Conferences:  Held at the start of school so the teacher can meet students' families</p>	<p>Comments about activities, interests and/or behavior  Concerns about a student's academic performance, behavior, attendance, health</p>
<p>Provide space in the assignment notebook or "Friday folder":  parents and teachers can correspond</p>	<p>student's progress  questions/offer ideas about the student's classroom learning and development</p>
<p>"Good News" Calls</p>	<p>positive comments about how the student is doing in school</p>
<p>Collaborative Study Process: Provides a venue for educators and parents/family members to problem solve and create an action plan to help the student. Continue to meet for follow-up until the concern is resolved.</p>	<p>Concerns about a student's academic performance, behavior, attendance, health</p>
	<p>Important events and achievements, such as completing a project or reaching a new skill level</p>
	<p>Comments about activities, interests and/or behavior</p>
	<p>Skills the student has accomplished</p>



<b>Sharing Information With Parents and Family Members About the Classroom and School</b>	
<b>Strategies for Sharing Information</b>	<b>Types of Information to Share</b>
Monthly Coffee/Lunch with the Principal	Invite family feedback about school activities in a relaxed format
Parent Forums	District/school staff, parents and family members work together to learn from and use all resources available to meet the student's and parent's learning needs. Possible Topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expectations for student conduct</li> <li>• discipline policies</li> <li>• child development</li> <li>• family involvement</li> <li>• Student achievement</li> </ul>
Online Surveys (free surveys can be found on Survey Monkey and Zoomerang)	Survey parents about their perceptions of how well the school is meeting their needs
	Classroom daily schedules
	Classroom/school events and activities
Half and Half Letters (see final page of this activity)	
Provide sticky notes and pens to parents and family members at Open House and encourage them to write their questions down and post in a common area (e.g. bulletin board). Address questions at a specific time in the auditorium or via the weekly communication home to families	

Module 2: Communicating Effectively

Activity 2.3

	Behavior expectations and guidance Policies
	Subjects being studied
	Skills being taught
	Teaching and assessment strategies used
	Relevance of subjects and skills to the child's life and future learning
	Opportunities to help in the classroom and/or school

### Half and Half Letters

Review these two, sample half and half letters. How could you use these with families in your school?

<p>Dear Parent(s), We would like you to help us improve our school. On “Your Half”, give us your suggestions about the idea or topic from “Our Half”. Letting us know what you think helps us make the right decisions about our school. Thank you.</p>	
Our Half	Your Half
<p>Dear Families,</p> <p>Parent involvement in our school continues to be a top priority. We are continuing with our plans to make our school the center of the community. One idea we are considering is having a night at school that would highlight our community resources including the YMCA, Big brothers/sister, County Assistance, Boy/Girl Scouts, Salvation Army, local faith-based organizations, hospital, fire company, police department, and chamber of commerce. These agencies provide multiple services available to you and your family. The evening would include time to view the various resources of specific interest to you.</p>	<p>Please respond by completing this half and turning it into the school office.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In favor of idea  <input type="checkbox"/> Not in favor of idea  <input type="checkbox"/> Would attend  <input type="checkbox"/> Would not attend  <input type="checkbox"/> Like idea, but it needs _____</p> <p>Strengths of idea: _____</p> <p>Weaknesses of idea: _____</p>
<p>Here is another example:</p>	
Our Half	
<p>Dear Families,</p> <p>Next year is our middle school’s year to select a new science textbook series. We will be reviewing the PA Academic science standards, the Standards Aligned System <a href="http://www.pdesas.org/">http://www.pdesas.org/</a> and comparing them to available resources. We would like to improve our science program and are looking at materials that have research suggesting that they improve student understanding.</p> <p>We would like to know your thoughts and priorities in looking at new science materials. Please share your thoughts, opinions, and ideas on the bottom portion of this letter.</p>	
Your Half	
<p>Signature (Optional) _____</p>	

Source: Preston, J. and Whipple, M.