

Establishing a Good Relationship with Your Child's Teacher

Summer is over and you're sending your precious children off to school. Now you're entrusting them in the care of teachers and school staff that will see them for over seven hours a day for the next 180 days. If you're anything like me, you wish you could sew little cameras into their backpacks in order to watch and experience every moment of their day right along with them. However, for lots of reasons, that is not an option.

Instead we find ourselves settling for the one-word answers to questions like, "How was your day?" and, "What did you do?" Even getting that much is like pulling teeth. The only time that you might hear more than answers like 'fine' or 'nothing', is when something has gone wrong. At that point, you can expect an earful!

The best way to pave the road to success for your child during the school year is to establish a good, supportive relationship with your child's teacher.

How do you start?

1. **Reach out first.** We live in a busy world where sometimes the thought of stopping what we are doing to send an email can be harrowing, but taking just a few minutes to introduce yourself can be a powerful tool for your child and their educational success. Give your child's teacher a way to contact you as well. I had a wonderful parent last school year that made it clear to me on the first day of school that she was only an email away, and she made good on the promise. If she didn't hear from me, she emailed me once every two weeks just to check in. When parents keep in touch, it's easier to communicate any range of information like when your child is struggling, or when they do something great.
2. **Get Technological.** Many teachers utilize tools for their classroom like Blackboard or Remind to let you know exactly what is happening at school. They update their sites with contact information, classroom handouts, and resources to help students practice their skills. Teachers can often send text reminders through these sites to let you know when something is due. You just have to sign up to receive these messages. Other tools like A+ Grades or other online grading systems allow you to check your child's grade in real time when the teacher enters it. A parent of three of my former students utilized these digital tools by sending her children to school each day with printed grade sheets and notes for me to sign. It kept the students accountable for all their work and made my job easier.
3. **Be Approachable, Not Defensive.** From time to time, you must go to school for a conference to meet one or more of your child's teachers. Usually it is because your child is having a little trouble in school. Commonly, these conferences are either collaborative or defensive. The first scenario is the dream conference for all involved. You arrive with a smile, find the teachers are helpful, and everyone works together to come up with a game plan to help your child. After this conference everyone leaves feeling good about your child's

education. The other type of scenario happens when you put on your suit of armor before you leave the house and come in ready for battle. Usually, nothing good gets accomplished in this conference. I am a mother, so believe me, I know how it feels when your child tells you that he or she is being treated unfairly. Everything inside of you screams to find justice for your sweet baby. But before you do this, take a deep breath and step back. We are all fighting the same battle and are not on opposite sides; we might just have different perspectives. It is possible that children act differently at school than they do at home, or that a teacher has made a mistake or been misunderstood. The best way to maintain a good relationship for the benefit of your child is to remain approachable and open to communication.

4. **Share Ways to Help.** When you share with the teacher what has worked to help your child in the past, it makes the teacher's job easier and lets your child know how invested you are in their education. My second year teaching I had a brilliant student who was diagnosed with dyslexia and dysgraphia. I had no idea what dysgraphia was, and I didn't really know how to help a student with either diagnoses. I did some research, but my best resource was the child's mother. She made flash cards for to help her son study that were color coded and gave me resources to use when he struggled on any range of items. I soon found myself calling her before I planned my lessons so that I could integrate her ideas for the whole class! Her son made an "A" in my class and it was because his mom didn't hesitate to share helpful information with me.

Of all these ways to create a good, meaningful relationship with your child's teacher, the common thread is communication. Positively communicating with teachers at your child's school increases your child's academic success.

Adapted from Stand.org, [What We Do – Better Education for All | Stand for Children](#).