



# Bulletin

Parents Learning About Children's Education

*A service for all parents of kids in Massachusetts' public schools*



## Parent-Teacher Relationships

No matter the age or grade of your child, building a good relationship with teachers is vital. This article from a U.S. Department of Education clearinghouse gives advice on how to build a good relationship and resolve differences.

### How can teachers and parents foster open, ongoing communication?

The foundation for good parent-teacher relationships is frequent and open communication. Both teachers and parents share responsibility for creating such a foundation. To establish open communication, *teachers can:*

- Early in the school year, let parents know how and when they can contact the school and the teacher as questions or concerns arise. Teachers can use letters, newsletters, or phone calls to inform parents.
- Learn about parents' concerns and interests in preparation for parent-teacher conferences. Early in the school year, ask parents to share their main concerns and goals for their child.
- Practice an open-door, open-mind policy. Teachers can invite parents to visit the classroom at any time that is convenient to the parents. Parents can gain an understanding of their child's view of a situation and see for themselves what the teacher is trying to achieve.
- Involve parents in classroom activities. Let parents know how they can be helpful with specific activities.

Parents also have an important role to play in fostering open communication. *Parents can:*

- Introduce themselves and let teachers know when they can be reached most easily (daytime or evening), and also how they would prefer to be contacted (by telephone, e-mail, letter, or in person).
- Be involved in classroom and school activities at whatever level work and family responsibilities allow. Let the teacher know ways of helping, such as with displays, weekend activities, fieldtrips, etc., that interest them.
- Initiate regular contact. Parents need not wait for the teacher to call them; they can contact the teacher, too.

### What are some strategies for teachers and parents who disagree?

When teachers and parents disagree, open communication is invaluable. In times of disagreement, *teachers should:*

- Know and follow school and district policies for addressing parent-teacher disagreements.
- Respect privacy—use discretion about when and where children and their families are discussed.

Parents must know the facts. When disputes arise, *parents should:*


- Talk directly with the teacher. Address complaints to the teacher first, either in person or by telephone. Then approach other personnel as specified by school policy. Always check the facts directly with the teacher before drawing conclusions.



- Avoid criticizing the teacher in front of children. Criticism is likely to foster arrogance, defiance, and rudeness toward teachers.
- Choose an appropriate time and place to discuss disagreements. The end of the day, when both teachers and parents may be tired, is probably not the best time.

For more on parent-teacher relationships, check out the Parents' PLACE website for a series of articles from the October 2001 edition of the *Bulletin* at: [www.pplace.org/Bulletins/Word/English/bulletinv2n3w.html](http://www.pplace.org/Bulletins/Word/English/bulletinv2n3w.html)

*This article is based on the 1996 ERIC Digest, How Can We Prevent and Resolve Parent-Teacher Differences?, by Lilian G. Katz, Amy Aidman, Debbie A. Reese, and Ann-Marie Clark of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. This article is in the public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part was granted.*



**Parents' PLACE** is a Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) funded by the U.S. Department of Education to help families and educators advance children's success in school. For more information, call toll-free 877-471-0980.

## What Parents Should Know about "No Child Left Behind"

"The No Child Left Behind amendments to the federal Title I program contain extensive provisions for parent involvement at the state, district and local school levels. Parents and community leaders can and should have a major influence on how fully and effectively these provisions are carried out." (Henderson, *No Child Left Behind: What's in it for Parents?*)

### What Parents Should Know

1. Every Title I school must have a written parent involvement policy, developed with and approved by parents.

2. Every Title I school must have a school/parent compact that describes how educators and parents will build a partnership to improve student achievement. This compact must be developed with, and approved by, parents.

3. Every school district must develop a written Title I parent involvement

policy that spells out how the district will engage parents in developing its Title I plan.

4. Every school district must distribute a report card on how each school, and the district as a whole, is performing.

5. If a child's Title I school has not made adequate progress over the past two or more years, parents have options. They can ask to transfer their child to a school that is making adequate progress, or they can request supplemental services and become involved in improving the school.

6. The state education agency must monitor the school districts' Title I programs to make sure they carry out the law, including requirements for involving parents.

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## Teacher Quality

The No Child Left Behind Act requires every classroom to have a highly qualified teacher by the end of the 2005-06 school year.

Highly qualified teachers must hold at least a bachelor's degree, have full state certification or licensure, and have demonstrated competence in their subject areas. However, states also have the flexibility to develop alternative routes to certification as well as methods to enable veteran teachers to prove they have the content knowledge to be successful in the classroom. At the local level, Title I schools must notify parents if their child has been assigned to a teacher who is not highly qualified or if their child has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by such a teacher.

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## Did You Know?

The rate of teachers lacking full certification remained unchanged over the past two years at 6 percent.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, *Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge: The Secretary's Second Annual Report on Teacher Quality*, 2003.

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