



Positive Phone Calls

Imagine the impact when parents receive phone calls letting them know how much progress their children have made in recent weeks or asking if they need any information about school programs and expectations. Home-school communication is greatly increased through personal contacts such as this between teachers and parents.

When a telephone call from school carries information that is positive, the atmosphere between the home and the school is improved. It encourages everyone to believe that all children can learn.

Benefits of Positive Phone Calls

To be most effective, parents need to receive at least two or three positive phone calls over the course of the school year. Some topics for consideration are

- introducing the teacher to the parent;
- describing the child's curriculum;
- commenting on the child's progress;
- informing the parent of a special achievement or improvement by the child;
- telling the parent of particular strengths of the child and sharing an anecdote about them; and
- Inviting the parents to open houses, conferences, volunteering in the school, and other school functions.

While simple in concept, a positive phone call program does require time and effort. Strong support is needed from school administrators, who must provide teachers with the time, feedback, and resources they will need to implement this program. Teachers also need to be involved in the planning to ensure their commitment.

Since many parents work during the day, teachers may need to contact parents in the evenings or on weekends. Teachers will need to have some accommodations made in their work schedules to compensate them for this extra time.

In order to gain commitment from teachers, schools must be willing to:

- Make time available to staff. Positive telephone calls can be carried on during selected months of the year. During these periods, the workload of teachers can be adjusted.
- Provide a proper facility. The program will not succeed unless teachers have a private and comfortable place from which to make their calls. Schools may need, therefore, to install additional telephone lines in classrooms and in lounge areas.
- Provide translation services for parents as needed.
- Provide a feedback system. Teachers should maintain log books or calling index cards so that the school has a record of positive phone calls. In this way, teachers and administrators can have a clearer sense of the scope and effectiveness of their efforts on a schoolwide basis.

Parent Call-In

An outgrowth of personalized telephone communication at some schools is the parent call-in. Teachers or administrators set up a regular call-in hour on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. During this time, parents can call to discuss their questions or concerns. These calling hours are announced in school newsletters, flyers sent home, and at school meetings.