

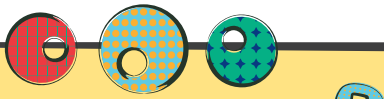


Ideas for Educators

42 Ready-to-Use Newsletters for School Success

2. POSITIVE FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Young person and his or her parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.



What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed. **Positive family communication** is one of six support assets.

28% of youth surveyed have this asset in their lives.*

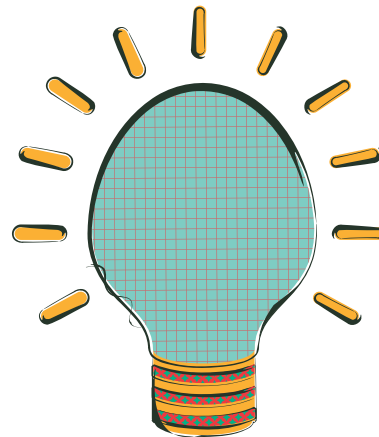
*Based on Search Institute surveys of 148,189 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States in 2003.

- Encourage students to come to parent-teacher conferences.
- Hold student conferences so students can discuss their classroom experiences with you in a nonjudgmental/ungraded setting.
- Have students write letters to parents to accompany a successful project or test grade.
- Hold a parent-student interview at the beginning of the year about each student's strengths and interests.
- Send home "dinner questions" that are related to classroom themes and activities.

Communicating Effectively

The kind of communication students experience at home is always reflected in how they communicate at school. When the communication model at home is ineffective, you are not responsible for changing that—but you can be responsible for modeling good communication in your interactions with students. So what does that look like?

First, when you have one-on-one conversations with students, decide what your goal is. Are you trying to elicit a certain behavior or administer discipline? Then you need to be efficient, brief, and calm in your explanation for why a student needs to do something or stop doing something else. Are you trying to find out more information about a situation? Then you need to ask questions and then actively listen to the student's response.



You can communicate your boundaries and expectations with your students by explaining your motivation behind them. When they question those expectations, listen to what they are saying and weigh that against your own view of the situation. You may occasionally find a simpler solution or better means of guiding your expectations.

In addition, pay attention to the broader context of the discussion. Is a student picking a fight with you because she just received a bad grade in another class? Is she being resistant and negative because she's sick, or tired, or dealing with a difficult situation outside of school? You might just need to listen and give her the space to help her feel better.

Listening to Your Sounding Boards

Here is a question to ponder: Why is your spouse or friends or family glad you are a teacher at this school? In other words, how does your work in this school benefit you as a person and a partner to others?

Here's an easy way to "take the temperature" of your work climate using your friends and family: ask them who and what they hear the most about in your work. When you come home happy and energized, who led to that? When you complain or vent, who is that about? The answers can go a long way toward helping you understand the relationships you're experiencing at work.

Your friends and family can also hold valuable insights about what (and who) you "bring home from work." What (and who) is the best part of your job? Figure out ways to increase your time with these positive elements. What (and who) is the most taxing part of your job? Figure out ways to mend, improve, and solve these lingering tensions.

