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EDU 413: Community/Parent/ Teacher/ Child

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 Whether you are going to be a classroom teacher, special education teacher, a parent, or any other profession regarding children you will need to know how to communicate with others and be aware and informed about strategies and activities used in a classroom. The ultimate goal is to improve the education and positively impact the lives of I am still undecided about where I see myself teaching in a few years. I hope to be a classroom teacher in either a kindergarten or first grade classroom. I feel that it is beneficial for every teacher to have a background in special education because you will likely have a student who has special needs or requires adaptations or modifications to be made in your classroom. A large part of being a teacher is being able to communicate with the parents of your students and other staff members. A parent is going to know there child better than anyone else so they will be able to help you identify likes, dislikes, and various needs. Other staff members are always going to have ideas that you can use in your classroom. Using all of these people as resources will only help you better understand the student and better be able to help them in their education.

Parenting

 Many schools offer opportunities for parents to have access to workshops and information about children developmentally. The workshops can be based on what the parents of that school feel they need more information. At the beginning of the school year or even before school starts you could send out a survey to see what the families want to know more about. Using their feedback you could see what type of sources, materials, and information would be most beneficial to them. You could create and send out another survey at the middle and end of the year so you know whether the information is being successfully transmitted. It may be workshops, books, movies, even reliable websites they could use. Having many options available for the parents would be very helpful.

 In my future classroom I would try to keep the parents updated about what is available whether it is through email, classroom Facebook page, or even texts. Technology is becoming more and more a part of education so I think you could also use it to communicate with parents. A nice thing about technology is that it is very fast and efficient. As a teacher I feel like email and the Facebook page would be a quick and easy way to inform parents about various opportunities and events. I also would like to implement a survey, which could also be online. Surveys would be really helpful because you are able to hear the perspective and opinions of the parents. I really want to know what their expectations are for the class and different resources or things they want to know. I feel like the only way to find that out is by talking about it with them.

 As a future teacher I hope I am able to establish trusting relationships with the parents and students in my class. I think that if you have the relationship and trust in place you will be more approachable. The parents and students will feel comfortable asking you questions or maybe for advice. In some cases teachers aren’t yet parents themselves, but they still have a background and plethora of knowledge about children’s development. That is not to say they are experts, but teachers would be a great source for ideas for parents so I hope I am able to be a person that they can talk to. I want the parents of my students to know that I want what is best for their children. I feel that teachers should be informed about ways to reach out to families and offer opportunities to share different options available.

Communicating

 Communicating is key to having a successful teaching career and year with all of your students. Establishing communication between your students, parents, and other staff members is very important. There are many aspects to communication and some strategies include scheduling parent-teacher-student conferences to establish student learning goals for the year and also teachers having ready access to telephones to communicate with parents during/after the school day. I think that creating this line of communication as early as possible is important. I hope that in my future classroom I am able to have meetings with the parents and the students before the school year even begins. I think it will do a lot to establish a relationship and show the parents and students that you value their opinions and wants and want to get to know them. As soon as you get a class list you could start contacting parents to set up meeting times before the school year. You could ask questions to get to know the parents, the students, and also offer a chance for them to get to know you as the teacher.

 Another strategy I would like to implement in my future classroom is having a classroom Facebook page. It would be a private group so only the parents of the students in your class would be able to see the posts made. This would allow you to post daily activities and pictures from your classroom. The classroom teacher could also use the page to post reminders about fieldtrips, permission slips, or any activities going on through the school. Because the page is for your class, the teacher could also use the Facebook page to post ideas or games that parents could do at home with their child. They could also be told about themes or new topics the class is covering so that the parents are able to ask their children about it. Facebook would also be a good way for parents to be able to communicate and ask questions of the teacher and also communicate with one another. The parents in your classroom would also then have a line of communication which would allow for them to build relationships.

 I have seen the classroom Facebook page used by many teachers in schools I have visited and worked in. For many of the parents it is a great way to stay updated and be aware of what is going on in the classroom. Especially for kindergarten parents, it may be a large change to not see their child for so many hours in the day. Being able to see pictures and continuously being updated about activities that their child is doing can be very important. In the kindergarten classroom I was in for practicum every day the class’s closing meeting or goodbye group was to recap for the day. They would discuss all the new things they learned, activities they did, and then the teacher would type it up and post it on the Facebook page. It was really fun way to end the day because the students reflected on what they did and then they also chose what they wanted to share and tell their parents. Facebook is very common with many people to day so I think it would be a great way to stay connected and establish communication.

I would note that it is important to consider the families, home life, and socio-economic status of the students in your classroom. Depending on the families access to computers or phones you may have to reconsider using this form of technology to communicate. A Facebook page would be very effective, but you have to make sure that it is practical and able to be used by all of the parents in your classroom. This may be an uncomfortable situation to bring up but maybe when you have the conferences with the parents at the beginning of the year you could ask whether or not they felt that would an efficient way to communicate.

Learning at Home

 Creating a relationship and maintaining communication will really be useful in helping children to learn in the home environment as well as at school. If the parents are informed about the concepts and material being taught they will be able to support the learning at home. Especially if a child is struggling or maybe just needs some extra practice, having the parents help and support the student would be very important. In a kindergarten classroom there is a large push for the students to know 75 of their sight or heart words. If a child was having a difficult time and the teacher had developed that relationship, the teacher could talk to the parents about making flashcards and practicing maybe once a night with their child.

 Learning at home is an important piece in education because you want the learning to be consistent. A child is learning and taking things in throughout the whole day so if you are able to have the teacher and parents be on the same page that would be very helpful. Also teachers are only with the students for seven hours a day for five days a week so if learning could happen at home to the child will make even more progress. The teacher could have resources available for the students to take how and work on material as well. I think just communicating and working with the parents will be an important aspect. Whether it be regarding assessments, different assignments or activities it is very important for parents to understand the purpose and also be able to talk to the teacher about it.

 Another way to incorporate learning at home is to have events that are for the entire family to be involved in. If the whole family can participate in activities together they can use some of the ideas in their homes to learn together as well. An example might be having a book or reading night at the school. The students, parents, and siblings could all be involved in the different activities that might include a read aloud, maybe book bingo, and then have book exchange. Books would be a great way to have everyone be included because the children would be interested in the books and the parents could learn about the importance of reading aloud to your children. You could have other activities like game nights, bingo nights, and any other things that the families might enjoy doing. This would be a way of incorporating learning but also using it as a time to interact with people in the community.

Volunteering

Volunteering is an important aspect of creating a relationship and communicating with the parents of students in your classroom. I think a useful strategy would be to inform the parents weekly about what activities the class will be doing. You can have an open door policy where you encourage and tell parents they are welcome to come in the classroom. For various activities, whether it be field trips or even art projects, it would be very helpful to have parents in the classroom. Parents are often very willing to share their time with the class. Having parents in the classroom would also build the community piece between students, teachers, and parents. I also think it would be nice to have the parents see what type of things go on in the classroom setting with their child.

 Volunteers and the people who are willing to share their time are often the ones that help run a school. I am an aide at Lincoln Elementary and everyday there are three volunteers who come in for the lunch and lunch recesses of every class. They help with wiping off tables and sweeping the floors between grades, but more than anything they are smiling faces that love to talk to the children. Many of the children actually call one of the volunteers Grandpa. He is there every day smiling, laughing, and telling the kids jokes. These volunteers mean more to this school than anyone realizes. It is something that means so much to the children and it is all possible because these volunteers offer up their time. I think offering up your time means more than anything else. I think that recognizing these volunteers in our school is very important. They should receive some recognition and thanks for all that they do in the school and for the children. As a future teacher I hope I am able to appreciate and make them feel very appreciated because I personally have seen how much of an impact they have on the children they interact with.

 In several kindergarten classes I have also seen volunteers, whether it be former teachers, parents, or community members come in and read with students. I think having people come in and read with the students would mean a lot. You could also have students read aloud to the volunteers. For many teachers finding time to individually read with each student is difficult to find time for. Volunteers would be a great way to allow students to develop their speaking skills, improve their reading, and also meet new people. Many volunteers could also be tutors or aides for different children in the classroom.

Decision Making

 Another important aspect of creating a family-community partnership work is to have them involved in the decision making. Ultimately many decisions regarding a child’s education fall on the responsibility of the parents. Teachers, specialists, and administrator can offer suggestions and their thoughts but many decisions are often made by the parents. Parents are able to ask for opinions and suggestions, but they are the deciding factor. For decision making, often times there is a lot of time and effort put in from various people to make the decision that is vest for that child. Two of the aspects of decision making are inviting staff and parent groups to meet collaboratively, providing space and time to do so. An activity that allows for this would also bring families together which allows them to communicate and advocate for each other. Many times families would benefit from being able to communicate with parents that can relate to them and also being able to discuss with staff members. I think creating a community night or social where parents would be able to converse with other parents and also teachers or staff members.

 I think having a social or community night would be a good opportunity to interact with each other but it would not be in such a formal setting. Parents a lot of times are called into the school for a meeting to discuss various issues that have come up. I think the idea of coming for a positive and non-specific meaning would be inviting. I think inviting all the parents might be overwhelming so even something like a night for each grade would be nice. I think especially for parents of children in the younger grades, they have a lot of questions and want to constantly know what is going on. I think that getting parents and teachers together in the same place would be a more personal and effective way to stay up to date and keep in touch. I also think it would be important to have these maybe every other month or once a month because it will be difficult to find a date and time that everyone is able to attend would be important.

 I would have the night or social at the school maybe in the cafeteria, gym, or discovery center. I feel like a week night maybe from 6 to 8 or something would be most convenient for parents. I would want to make it after most people would be finished with work. You could have it set up very open so that people can walk around and converse with one another. I think that allowing the parents to speak with and interact with teachers in a more casual setting would feel more comfortable. I also think that gathering many people would allow for many ideas and suggestions to circulate around the group. For many parents, especially in the younger grades like kindergarten or first, the parents may not be fully aware of all the services and opportunities available. For many parents having the opportunity to socialize and talk with other parents and teachers would be a great way to get informed. At the social or community night you could also have fliers and other information available, but I think ultimately the most beneficial would be creating the community setting amongst the parents and teachers in that school.

Collaborating with Community

 Collaborating and interacting with the community is another important aspect of being a teacher. I think that finding ways to bring various people in from the community would be very influential on the students. You could have community members, which could even be parents, come in and talk to the students about their job and what they do in the community. The children would then become informed about various jobs in the community and people. I also like the idea of having different people in the community come in a read to my kindergarten or first grade class. For example you could have a police officer, fire fighter, someone who works at the humane society, construction worker, and many other occupations come in and read aloud to the class.

 Having various people from the community come into the classroom setting would really help the two work together. I think it would get parents and other members of the community more involved in education if they saw first-hand the students in the classroom. Also reading aloud to the students would be very fun and exciting for the students. Having anyone read to them will help them to become more interested and engaged in the story, but have role models or people they look up to will have an even greater impact.

 Community can mean many things and I think making the people that make up the community a part of your classroom is very important. Student s are able to learn so many things from various experiences of places and people within the community. Community members would be so willing to come in and visit with a class and I think it would have a large impact on your class of students. I hope to make connections in the community so I am able to integrate the community piece into my future classroom. I think that teaching your students about communicating and working with people in the community is something they will be able to apply throughout their whole lives. Education is very important and to make it as successful as possible you need the help of many people. As a future teacher I hope I am able to create relationships and work together with my students, parents, of students, staff members, and other people in the community. Just like every student every person has something they can contribute to the lives of your students. The more opportunities you crate the more likely it is that you will find a connection for one of the students in your class.

References

A Checklist for Schools Making Your Family-Community Partnership Work. (n.d.)

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