What would you do?

• A child in your class missed many days of school the previous year due to a family illness. She was allowed to advance to your second grade class, but is struggling. You need to meet with the parents to let them know your concerns.

• A second grader in your class shows chronic behavior problems. One day he threw a basket of supplies across the room and his mother was called away from work to take him home. His mother returns to your room after school very upset. She thinks you are fueling her son’s problems.

• A child in your class is having problems with another student. You talked to the students and felt that the problem was resolved. However, the mother of one child is frustrated and angry about the situation and asks for a meeting.

(Babcock & Backlund, 2001)
Why is good communication so important?

- Family is the child’s first teacher; lay foundation for learning
- Success of child determined by parent involvement
- “Window” into child’s life
- Learn what child needs
- IDEA mandate

What might prevent a trusting and workable relationship?

- “Turf wars”
- Family’s fears
  - Socio-economic status
- Teacher labels
- “Menu-driven” approach
- Cultural differences
- Lack of confidence
Building a Relationship

Strategies
- Let them know how you care for student
- Put yourself in their shoes
- Provide family with info about their child
- Reach out to the family; make them feel welcome
- Sensitive to culture
- Meet where comfortable
- Be inclusive

Ways to Involve Child’s Family
(Mercer & Mercer, 2001)
- Classroom volunteers
- Classroom communication
- Ask family to help at home; provide suggestions
- Field trips
- Visits; “open door” policy
Find ways to involve them!

Things to Remember
- TRUST; establish rapport
- Treat as individuals
- Focus on child
- Be proactive
- LISTEN
- Begin with the positive
“Talk *with* parents, NOT at them.”
(Felber, 1997)

“You never really understand a person until...you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”
~Harper Lee *To Kill a Mockingbird*  
(Felber, 1997)
References


