

Section D: Parental Involvement

The list of instructionally related topics that could be addressed for new teachers is endless. While it is impossible to identify all areas related to instruction, one area that deserves attention is a discussion of parental involvement.

Consider the changes . . .

As a new teacher - has anything changed since YOU were in secondary education? What about course offerings? Could you have enrolled in:

- Computerized Accounting,
- Strategic Marketing,
- Biotechnology, or
- Medical Sciences I.

Are words such as VoCATS, block grants, Family and Consumer Sciences, SREB, school-to-work, and Workforce Development part of your daily vocabulary?

If you have difficulty keeping up, imagine what it must be like for the parent?

If today's teacher wants to assure that his or her students achieve, then the teacher must consider the importance of keeping parents informed about and involved in their child's education, and making education a community effort. After analyzing 30 years of research on parent and community involvement in education, Michael Fullen notes one very clear message: "The closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement."

This section will identify related research and suggest strategies for Health Occupations Education teachers to use in strengthening parental and community involvement and enhancing student achievement.

Why Health Occupations Education?

Teachers who prepare students for their future health careers have always had a close working relationship with the health care community. For many years, students have been placed in apprenticeships, mentorships, internships, and other "real world" work experiences.

In the past few years, all areas of the educational arena have begun to recognize the importance of these "real world" learning experiences. Efforts continue to "integrate curriculum" at the state and local levels to make traditional academic courses more connected to the student's real life experiences. In a July 1995 report to the State Board of Education, the North Carolina Standards and Accountability Commission stated that schools need to examine whether students can apply the knowledge being taught to real world situations.

The Commission recommended that students must demonstrate proficiency in the following six "real-world" areas prior to high school graduation:

- 1) Communications
- 2) Using Numbers and Data
- 3) Problem Solving
- 4) Processing Information
- 5) Teamwork
- 6) Using Technology



As education changes, so too should educational delivery strategies. The picture of the solo teacher standing in front of a classroom of students seated in straight rows is being replaced. The classroom that can meet the demands of tomorrow is active, student-centered, and supported by parents and the community.

THE FACT IS . . . Members of business and industry include the parents of our students.

THE FACT IS . . . "Children of parents who are more involved in school activities do better in school than children with parents who are less involved." (Stevenson 1987)

THE FACT IS . . . There are many ways to strengthen parental and community involvement in Career and Technical Education courses.

One of the National Education Goals written by the U.S. Congress and supported by the U.S. Department of Education states that:

"Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of all children."

What Can Parents Do?

Most parents would do more to help their child in middle school or high school achieve IF THEY KNEW how to help. Parents need to know that their help can make a difference, and they need suggestions on HOW to help their children achieve. They also need to know that they are welcomed by the school, both for their career knowledge and skills, and as co-educators.

SUGGESTION !!

Communicate with parents! Do it during an Open House, parent-teacher conference, on the telephone, or via a newsletter from your classroom. Use this booklet as a guide and *communicate!*



Advise the parents of your students to:

- 1) Persuade them to take higher level courses
- 2) Control home factors
- 3) Stop guilting!
- 4) Support your school
- 5) Talk with your teen

Always document/log your parental contacts.

▪ ***PERSUADE THEM TO TAKE HIGHER LEVEL COURSES!***

According to the Southern Region Education Board, and based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, students who take higher level courses in math and science show greater academic achievement than students who do not.

Students enrolled in career-related courses need high level math, science and language arts skills in a workplace that demands technical reading, writing, and mathematical accuracy. Parents should take an active part in the selection of courses in middle and high school. It is important for parents to note that educated mothers select more advanced courses for their high school child than less educated mothers - regardless of the academic performance of the child. (Stevenson 1987)

ALL PARENTS can monitor their child's course selection and make sure that their child is enrolling in high level courses that will support the student's career goals.

▪ ***CONTROL HOME FACTORS***

Three factors that parents can control explain 90% of the difference in eighth-grade mathematics test scores across 37 states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Those three factors are:

- Student absenteeism
- Variety of reading materials in the home
- Excessive television watching

Parents should read with their children, use TV wisely, schedule daily homework times, monitor out-of-school activities, and assure that school attendance is a priority!

▪ ***STOP GUILTING!***

The truth of the matter is, while two-thirds of employed parents with children say they do not have enough time for their children, two research studies proved the opposite is true. The child's performance IS NOT influenced by the mother's labor force participation or the number of children in the family (Heynes & Catsambis 1986 and Milne, Myers, Rosenthal & Ginsburg, 1986). It isn't how much time you have with your children that counts, but how you spend the time you have!

Let parents know that they should not blame income, parental education, or the age of their child. Studies of individual families show that what the family does is more important to student success than family income or education.

▪ ***SUPPORT YOUR SCHOOL***

Teachers and schools need the support of parents in maintaining high student expectations and supporting the learning process. Parents should be aware that there are students in the school who achieve very well. The difference may be that those students are spending more time on homework after school, and less time on chores, jobs, and social activities.

Parents should also be encouraged to become an active part of the school, either through participation in booster clubs or school activities. Be a parent volunteer! Get to know the teachers and administrators at the school. Keep in touch with the school rather than wait until a problem arises.



▪ ***TALK WITH YOUR CHILD***

"What did you do in your ____ (insert any subject area) class today?" Parents don't need to have classroom knowledge to help their child learn, they need to know how to ask about learning. For example:

Dad "What did you do in Allied Health Sciences II today?"

Son "We saw a video."

Dad "What was the video about?"

Son "Medical Sonography"

Dad "What's that?"

Son "Well, it's where they bounce sound waves off of something inside your body and it makes a picture on this screen?"

Dad "Why would they want to do that?"

Son "Well, like in the video there was this pregnant woman and the ultrasound showed that she was going to have triplets. See, now the doctors can take care of her more effectively because they know there will be three babies instead of one."

Dad "Oh, Aunt Jesse had one of those I think . . . "

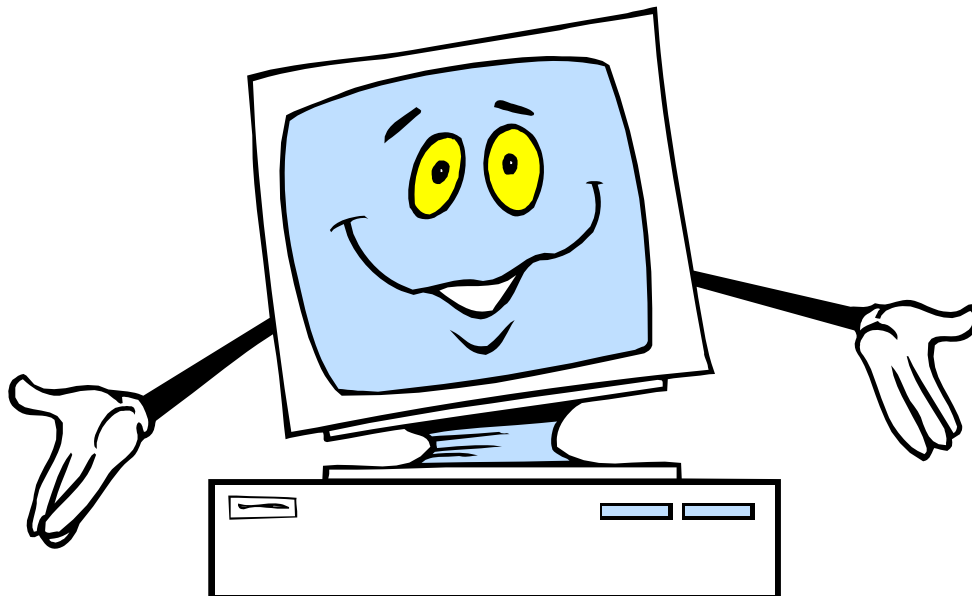
In this example, the father may not be an expert on Medical Sonography, but by asking questions, the son must recall and relate what he learned in class that day. By talking about what he learned, the son is less likely to forget the lesson than if he never thought about the concept again until it showed up on a future test.

Talking with their children helps parents communicate an "I care" attitude. They can communicate positive values and character traits such as respect, hard work, and responsibility. Talking also gives the parents an opportunity to offer praise and encouragement for their son's or daughter's achievements.

*Fortunately for children, the uncertainties of the present always
give way to the enchanted
possibilities of the future. - Gelsey Kirkland*

For more information regarding involving parents in schools, visit the following website:

<http://www.ed.gov>
then click on "parents"



Tips for Improving Parent Involvement in Instruction

- Open House** Invite current and prospective parents to a special Open House for your class/courses. Invite current students to be involved by giving testimonies, participating in role playing, and sharing accomplishments. Serve refreshments.
- Follow-Up** Send follow-up letters to parents to express appreciation for their attendance at parent/teacher conferences.
- Letter** Send a letter to parents at the beginning of the year describing the course and expectations and the things they can do help their son/daughter achieve.
- Phone Calls** Call every parent within the first 9 weeks of school to introduce yourself and establish rapport. Share something positive about their son/daughter.
- PTA Meeting** Ask to speak at a PTA meeting to talk about your class/course – or have your students make a presentation related to their learning.
- Parent Homework** Make interaction with parents a part of a homework assignment. For example: Before beginning to read a novel, ask students to poll their parents to ask if THEY read the book, and what do they remember about it. Use the sharing of those memories as a pre-reading activity.
- Study Credit** Make out a form for parents to sign when they help kids study for a test. Include a blank for the amount of time they studied together. Award bonus points to students who turn in signed study credits with their test.
- Parents in Class** Invite parents to class - by appointment. Provide a parent checklist and let the parent evaluate their child's learning.
- Newsletter** Just because students are in high school doesn't mean that parents stop caring about their son/daughter's learning. Sending home a newsletter at selected intervals will help the parent understand the course expectations. Understanding sparks interest - and interested parents are more likely to focus on a student's schoolwork and learning than those parents who don't know what their child is doing in the classroom.