Home-School Link Barriers.
What are they and how can they be broken down?
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Part 8 of a series of 12 of Macmillan’s Home-School Link

It’s great when you are able to set up a good home-school link. But what do you do when you encounter barriers? How do you deal with them? Match these top four problems with their solutions.

Quantitative and Qualitative Measures
Setting measurable goals will help to provide tangible results, otherwise known as quantitative feedback. Whilst this kind of feedback provides precise analysis, qualitative data can give you an understanding of why things happen and how people feel. Qualitative feedback can include notes that you have written, word of mouth feedback from parents and more formal means of measuring feedback, such as a parent questionnaire.

PROBLEM 1: Preconceptions. Either parents have preconceptions about their role and relationship to you, or you judge parents based on their child’s behaviour and appearance.

Solution: __

PROBLEM 2: You find it difficult to share negative feedback with parents.

Solution: __

PROBLEM 3: Some parents never respond to your communication.

Solution: __

PROBLEM 4: Whilst parents blame you for problems, you in turn blame them. And you expect one another to fix the problems.

Solution: __

SOLUTION A:

Whatever happens, do not blame parents for their child’s lack of progress or bad behaviour. Blaming them will only alienate them from you.

Try to get parents on your side by introducing yourself as soon as you learn their child will be in your class. Keep up positive contact with them and give them opportunities to be involved in their child’s learning and school activities. This way you are more likely to build a positive relationship with parents and they are more likely to communicate with you when there is a problem at home.

If you feel you are being blamed by parents, please don’t take things personally. Remain diplomatic and professional. If you are meeting a parent and are nervous, why not invite a colleague to the meeting for moral support. At the same time, make sure the parent does not feel they are being ganged up on.

SOLUTION B:

It can be very frustrating when your communication is not acknowledged by parents, but keep your cool and follow these simple steps.

• Review the messages you have sent. Are your messages too long? Maybe parents do not have time to read them properly?

• Explain to parents directly what you are trying to achieve. Tell them about the benefits of a good home-school link. Ask them if they have any concerns. If they do, you may need to moderate your expectations.

• Persevere. Perseverance shows your commitment to the parents and child. Try to make each message is different and not simply routine.
SOLUTION C:

Make sure you give parents a chance. Don’t judge them based on their child. Invite them to the school or talk to them directly without the child present so that you can get a feeling for who they are as an individual.

If you are feeling judged by parents, it’s important you break their preconceptions about you. Break the mould by surprise calling them with positive feedback about their child, put on a performance of their child’s work and make it a celebration of every child. This will make parents feel more involved, feel proud and want to be involved in their child’s education.

SOLUTION D:

If you communicate bad news about progress more often than good news, parents are less likely to work with you to help their child and will feel less able to help their child.

Personalised positive telephone feedback improves home-school communication.

If you do have bad news to convey, try to sandwich it between some positive feedback. If there is a real problem, set up a separate dialogue.

Parental involvement does lead to improved results. You can get parents more involved by sharing the syllabus with them and ensure they understand how it works. They will be more likely to get involved with their child’s education and help, if they understand what their child is learning and why. Make sure you demonstrate to parents how they can help their child.

It’s important that teachers and parents work together towards a common goal. Work together directly and avoid using the child as a messenger.

Answers:

1. What is Home-School Link?
2. How well do you communicate with parents?
3. Top tips on developing a good communication strategy.
4. Using technology in your Home-School Link.
5. Personal contact with parents.
6. Open evenings and parents’ evenings.