

Dimension 6: Communicating With Parents

This dimension is about how teachers view and exercise their role with respect to communicating with parents about their child's achievement and about the math program. There are two factors to consider when talking about communicating with parents, the "what" or the message to be communicated, and the "how" or the medium through which to communicate the message.

THE MESSAGE

First to consider is the message, or "what" the teacher is communicating to the parents. All teachers realize that, at the very least, they must alert parents if their child is struggling and achievement is at risk. Teachers are also required to communicate with parents about how their child is performing at the end of a reporting period. However, there are other things that could be communicated such as regular positive messages, for example, informing parents when their child displays extra effort in completing a task, shows exceptional leadership in group activities, or shows particular insight or creativity in his or her work. As well, information about current or upcoming units of study, and tips for parents on how to prepare or support their child with a particular topic could be communicated. Some teachers facilitate parent sessions or workshops to inform them about new approaches and topics in mathematics as a way of being proactive and enlisting parent support.

Communication with parents should be two-way; parents can communicate important information about their children, which is helpful in student programming.

THE MEDIUM

The second factor to consider is the medium, or "how" the teacher communicates to parents. There are multiple ways to communicate with parents: report cards, phone calls home, e-mail, homework, comments in student agendas, newsletters and Web pages, classroom and hall displays, and anecdotal comments on student work sent home are all ways that teachers can communicate with parents about how their child is performing and about what is happening in the math classroom. The nature of the message often determines the medium. For example, sensitive issues such as how a student may be struggling are best done confidentially in a face-to-face meeting and/or with a phone call. Information about an upcoming unit of study could be done in a general classroom newsletter, on a Web page, or in calendar format. As far as informing parents about mathematics education, teachers can work with their staff to host events such as curriculum and family math nights (see pages 65–67 in Section 5 *Involving Parents*).



If parents are aware of what is happening in mathematics at school, they can provide valuable support in the way of real-world experiences.

HOW THE ADMINISTRATOR CAN SUPPORT THE TEACHER

The administrator can help the teacher in this dimension by

- providing clerical help for such things as contacting parents and creating newsletters and Web pages
- providing an additional paper supply budget for parent communication
- working with the staff collaboratively to inform parents about the mathematics program
- supporting the teacher when confronted with demanding parents

LINKING THE NCTM PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS

This dimension links most strongly to the *Assessment* and *Curriculum* principles by providing both assessment and curriculum information to parents (see pages 4 and 5 in Section 1).

PRIMECONNECT

Guide to Using the Developmental Map

This book in each mathematics strand of PRIME contains suggestions for parents to help their children in each developmental phase. (See page vii.)