

- Realize that students are often embarrassed to ask for help during class. Periodically monitor students' progress throughout class by individually inquiring with each student about his or her progress. Be available before and after school for study sessions and in between classes for additional assistance.
- Make sure students are on task by walking around their desks and prompting them to return to the task at hand if they are not working diligently.
- Elicit the aid of parents in a three-way partnership among student, parents, and teacher. Communicate the progress of the student through the student's daily assignment agenda. For example, have the student record any special assignments or daily homework in an agenda. This teaches the student the responsibility of finding out the daily requirements expected of him or her. As a teacher, read the student's agenda and clarify any mistakes or omissions the student may have made, record any newly earned grades, and comment on the student's progress. At night, parents also check the student's agenda and communicate any questions or comments by writing in the student's agenda for the teachers to read the following day.

Working With Parents and Families

Parents want to be informed. When a student does not do well on an assignment or seems to fall behind in class, contact the parents via e-mail, phone, or note or in person to inform them of their child's progress or any concerns. Parents also enjoy seeing samples of their child's classwork. For instance, sending home a portfolio during each grading period gives parents an opportunity to see growth in writing skills or progress in reading comprehension. A commentary sheet requesting parents and child to analyze the enclosed work is an excellent means of feedback for teachers. This process of commenting on favorite pieces of writing and selecting a writing piece for publication in a contest or school literary magazine also causes the child to reflect on his or her improvements.

Hosting parent seminars as a team of teachers once a semester on topics such as "Boosting Your Child's Study Habits," "Interpreting SAT-10 Scores" with an emphasis on building on strengths and improving weaknesses, and "Improving Reading Comprehension With Reading Strategies" provides an avenue for improving students' learning with the

collaboration of students, parents, and teachers. Parents often desire to help their child at home but are not always equipped with the necessary tools to do so. Through parent seminars, parents learn strategies they can use at home to reinforce the learning that takes place at school. Parents learn of these seminars and other events through team newsletters that are distributed with report cards or progress reports during each grading period.

Each effort at communication through phone calls, notes, person-to-person contact, or e-mail is recorded in my communication log, including the name of the person with whom I spoke, the means of communication, the time and date, and a brief description of the conversation. This helps me to remember the conversation's details in case I need to follow up with the student and parent in the future.

Advice for Making Inclusion and Collaboration Work

My advice to new teachers working in inclusive settings would be to learn as much as possible not only about a student's academic needs but also about the student as a person. Sometimes just knowing about a student's personal interests can be a catalyst to help him or her improve learning. Learn about the student's academic performance and needs by talking with the special education teacher and reviewing last year's report card, standardized test scores, and portfolio. Learn about the student's personal interests by having the student complete a reading and writing questionnaire, participate in book talks or reading/writing conferences, and observe the student interacting with other students. Use the knowledge that you have gained to improve students' learning process.

Knowing a child's learning styles, needs, and strengths allows you to approach the child's difficulties and challenges with new insight. This also shows the student that you care about him or her as an individual and not just as a member of a class. Finally, do not be afraid to continue to elicit the help of parents, special education teachers, other team teachers, counselors, administrators, and other education professionals who work directly with the child. Sharing ideas and collaborating with others will greatly benefit all involved.

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