

Here are some suggestions from The International Center for Leadership in Education on building relationships with parents and community members:

- 1) Get to know your parents on a first-name basis, and encourage them to address you by your first name
- 2) Work hard to demonstrate to parents that they are equal to you as human beings; you just have different roles in the life of their child
- 3) Use humor. It breaks down barriers. Accept good-natured teasing from parents and enjoy a good laugh together.
- 4) Demonstrate active listening. Seek first to understand, and then to be understood.
- 5) Be aware of your nonverbal behavior and realize that it is stronger communication than the actual words you speak.
- 6) Be visible. When parents perceive you are everywhere—sporting events, concerts, conferences, they make a judgment that this visibility means that you care about their child. Yes, this takes time, but the dividends pay capital gains.
- 7) Recognize that in order to develop trust among parents, you must exhibit trustworthiness. Always be true to your word. When parents trust you and realize that you care about their child, their behavior changes unobtrusively.
- 8) Be authentic. If you practice authenticity with parents, you will be able to anticipate and prepare for the types of questions and concerns that parents will present to you.
- 9) Communicate that problems or weaknesses are opportunities. What makes your school different is recognizing these “probleturnities” as a chance to improve conditions for your students.
- 10) And finally, as you engage parents in partnerships, the focus should always be on the children, and never on the attributes or behaviors of the parents.