

# What Are the Benefits of Communication Skills to Teachers?

by Stacy Zeiger



Communication skills are important for many professions but are crucial for teachers. Teachers communicate with students, parents, colleagues and administrators every day. Whether communicated face-to-face, on the phone, in print, electronically or through the public address system, the message must be constructed carefully and delivered clearly to be properly received. Good handwriting, spelling and grammar are very important in all forms of written communication.

## Students

Communication skills involve listening as well as speaking. Teachers who listen attentively to their students' questions and complaints are better equipped to meet individual needs and adjust lessons where necessary. Students are also more likely to be receptive when the teacher's body language and tone of voice indicate openness and encouragement. Appropriate use of audio-visual aids also can enhance presentations and make them easier for students to follow.

## Parents

Teachers should communicate frequently with parents and not wait for scheduled parent-teacher interviews. Reporting good news regularly strengthens the teacher-parent relationship and makes it easier for the parent to hear bad news when necessary. Teachers who are good communicators can share negative reports about students tactfully and without suggesting blame and also state their message clearly enough so the parents understand the concern. Skillfully delivered communication can earn respect from the parents and support for working together toward a positive outcome.

## Colleagues

Although teachers spend most of their working day surrounded by 20 or more students, they often become flustered when speaking in front of their colleagues at staff meetings or conferences. Communication skills improve with practice, and preparing in advance what to say also helps. Taking a leadership role with other teachers in the school by chairing or co-chairing a committee provides the opportunity to enhance these skills. Communicating with colleagues in this way may be very rewarding and personally fulfilling. It also shows initiative, which can lead to advancement or promotion.

## Administrators

Teachers who are skillful communicators have a better chance of being heard by administrators when making a request, such as for a transfer, special leave or permission for a student event or field trip. Good communicators clearly state the reasons for their request, anticipate possible counter-arguments and are prepared to refute them. They control their emotions, don't lose their tempers and always behave in a professional manner, even in disappointing or frustrating situations. Administrators who recognize such efforts are more receptive to granting a positive response to teacher requests.