

Why Is It Important for Teachers to Have Good Communication Skills? by Freddie Silver



The art of communication involves listening and speaking as well as reading and writing. Teachers need to be highly skilled in all these areas to excel in their profession. Proficient communicators receive information, understand and synthesize it and express themselves at a high level. They make excellent teachers because they are able to transmit knowledge, skills and values at the same time they communicate their caring for the students entrusted to their care. They help motivate students to learn.

Teaching Individuals and Groups

Communication is both receptive and expressive. Teachers must be skilled at listening to their students as well as explaining things clearly. Teachers need clarity of thought to present the material. They must be able to break down complex ideas into simpler parts and smaller steps to transmit to their students. They must be able to adapt their methods of communication to all students regardless of ability or learning style. They are able to "read" their students and adapt to the needs of the individual. Effective communication includes transforming the boring into the interesting and having good presentation skills.

Communicating Caring

In addition, good teachers communicate concern and caring by their tone of voice and use of body language. They transmit genuine commitment and affection for their students. Good teachers care about their students' progress and let their students know it at all times. They learn their students' names early in the school year and use their names when addressing them. They get to know their students' hopes, fears and preferences and communicate this knowledge to their students. They communicate their appreciation for what their students do by celebrating their successes and constantly encouraging them. This helps students feel recognized and validated.

Communicating to Parents

Teachers must be able to express themselves both verbally and in writing in order to report student progress to parents. They need to explain the strengths and weaknesses of their students so that parents will understand the message and be receptive rather than defensive. This is especially important when the teacher conveys a difficult message about the student's misbehavior or learning problems. The message must be delivered clearly and with tact. Teachers should be comfortable communicating with parents regularly, with phone calls and informal notes in addition to formal report cards.

Interacting with Colleagues and Supervisors

Although teaching is often done in the isolation of a classroom without the presence of other adults, good teaching involves consultation with colleagues. Schools that see themselves as professional learning communities encourage teachers to plan lessons together and learn from one another. They take a team approach when problem-solving, especially for difficult students. This all requires excellent communication. Teachers stay abreast of new developments in education by reading journals, listening to new ideas from their administrators and school board consultants, and sharing and discussing these ideas with colleagues.