

Creating Connections with Parents For School Counselors & Teachers

<u><i>Characteristics</i></u>	<u><i>Guidelines</i></u>
The parent who is angry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give the parent time to express feelings while you sit quietly and reposed. • Use active listening skills to assess the underlying causes of such strong feelings. • Change the focus to problem solving • If the parent becomes verbally abusive, politely end meeting and suggest alternative time to meet.
The parent who is disappointed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to the parents' expectations. • Help parents to do a "reality check". • Discuss that they may be imposing their on dreams or goals on their children, rather than allowing the children to choose.
The parent who is troubled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a relationship based on trust by listening with empathy. • Then, with the aid of other school personnel as needed, urge a consultation with a professional therapist or physician.
The parent who is manipulative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that such parents want something from you. • Remain calm. • Stand by your professional judgment.
The parent who is quiet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine why the parent is quiet (language barrier, cultural custom, nervous, passive personality). • Obtain translation services, if needed. • Ask open-ended questions. • Increase your "wait time" after questions.
The parent who comes unannounced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank the parent for coming. • Acknowledge his/her interest and concern. • Explain you are not available to confer at this time. • Request the parent return at an appropriate time.
The parent who doesn't know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain expectations. • Demonstrate how to help with homework. • Show samples of student work. • Discuss how to communicate with child.
The parent who doesn't speak English <i>(Author Unknown)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a translator present at conferences. • Utilize bilingual staff to help with telephone calls to the home. • Have another parent explain school/academic expectations. • Send home information in the parents' native language.

Four components to consider when engaging parents: approach, attitudes, atmosphere, and actions. The components are defined as follows:

- ✓ Approach: The framework for interaction with parents
- ✓ Attitudes: The values and perceptions held about parent-teacher/parent-counselor relationships
- ✓ Atmosphere: The climate for parent-teacher/parent-counselor interactions
- ✓ Actions: Strategies for building shared responsibility for students' progress and success

These four A's serve as a guide in the development of parent-teacher/parent-counselor connections for the benefit of student outcomes. They represent a process that teachers and counselors can use to be context-sensitive. (Christenson, 2001).

