

Chalkboard

By

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As you read this article, the Gentry Public School District will be on Day 2 of the second semester Parent-Teacher Conferences. At these type meetings the district complies with two laws. The first *A.C.A. 6-15-903 Report cards* says “(a)(1) Every public school district shall provide a report card for each student reflecting the student's grade in each class in which the student is enrolled. (2) The report card shall be: (A) Mailed to the last known address of the student; (B) Given to a parent at a parent-teacher conference; or (C) Sent home with the student.” (b) The report card shall be provided at the end of each grading period but no fewer than four (4) times each school year. (c) Parents shall not be required to provide postage or self-addressed envelopes to receive a report card.”

An excerpt from *A.C.A. 6-15-1702 Parental involvement plan* yields the following: “(a) By September 1, 2003, each public school district and each public school within its boundaries, in collaboration with parents, shall establish a parental involvement plan, including programs and practices that enhance parental involvement and reflect the specific needs of students and their families. (b) The parental involvement program in each school shall: (1) Involve parents of students at all grade levels in a variety of roles; (2) Be comprehensive and coordinated in nature; (3)(A) Recognize that communication between home and school should be regular, two-way, and meaningful. (B) To encourage communication with parents, the school shall prepare family kits, appropriate for the age and grade of the child, describing: (i) The school's parental involvement program; (ii) The recommended role of the parent, student, teacher, and school; (iii) Ways for the parent to become involved in the school and his or her child's education; (iv) Activities planned throughout the school year to encourage parental involvement; and (v) A system to allow the parents and teachers to communicate in a regular, two-way, and meaningful manner with the child's teacher and the school principal. (C) *To encourage communication with parents, the school shall schedule no fewer than two (2) parent-teacher conferences per school year.*”

Okay, there is the legal basis. All of the above are important reasons to meet with you. So why is your involvement in your child's education important. Why

does Arkansas law promote your involvement?

An article found at <http://www.nea.org/parents/index.html>, the web site for the National Education Association, entitled “Why Is Parental Involvement Important?” offers several reasons supported by research. In part the article says, “In study after study, researchers discover how important it is for parents to be actively involved in their child's education. Here are some of the findings of major research into parental involvement: ***When parents are involved in their children's education at home, they do better in school. And when parents are involved in school, children go farther in school — and the schools they go to are better.***”

The family makes critical contributions to student achievement from preschool through high school. A home environment that encourages learning is more important to student achievement than income, education level or cultural background. Reading achievement is more dependent on learning activities in the home than is math or science. Reading aloud to children is the most important activity that parents can do to increase their child's chance of reading success. Talking to children about books and stories read to them also supports reading achievement. When children and parents talk regularly about school, children perform better academically.

Three kinds of parental involvement at home are consistently associated with higher student achievement: actively organizing and monitoring a child's time, helping with homework and discussing school matters. The earlier that parent involvement begins in a child's educational process, the more powerful the effects.

Positive results of parental involvement include improved student achievement, reduced absenteeism, improved behavior, and restored confidence among parents in their children's schooling.”

So, there is a legal basis and a research-based incentive. But there is one more practical aspect of you visiting the school for Parent-Teacher Conferences and other times. That aspect is face-to-face communication with your child's teacher. Notes home are fine. Telephone calls are useful. Even modern day communication by e-mail has its place. However, I venture that no means of communication beats personal contact. Establishing an honest, two-way, in-person “listen-talk-listen-talk-listen...” dialogue between parent and educator is a relationship builder that can only benefit the child. Good or bad, second-hand observations of a child, from kindergarten to senior high, to his or her parent cannot always convey what one adult needs to say to another.