

1. Building positive relationships

The following tips The Indian Model School will help staff to build positive relationships with parents and the school community, in which power and decision-making are

Seek mutual respect

The unique relationship that a parent or teacher has with a child might at times lead to differences of opinion as to what is best for the child. Both parties need to appreciate and respect the special skills and insights that each brings to their relationships with a child.

Understand and appreciate each other's perspective

If a child is hurt in the playground, or isn't provided with correct information to make career choices, it is natural for a parent to protect and defend their child. Teachers need to appreciate the parent's perspective and parents need to appreciate that the teacher wants to protect the child too.

Use two-way communication

Tension in the parent/teacher relationship can arise when both parties are strongly motivated to do the best for the child. The ability to voice differences of opinion, respectfully and with understanding, indicates that the school community is working well together.

Set common goals

Most parents and teachers would agree that they want the best for the child. However, in practice, either may sometimes find themselves promoting a particular solution to the exclusion of all else. A skilled facilitator can help bring both parties back to focusing on common goals.

Have realistic expectations

If a teacher's or the parents' expectations are unrealistic, they will be dissatisfied with the best efforts that the other party is able to make. Positive relationships are built when each party is able to meet each other's expectations.

Clarify responsibilities

Each staff member needs the knowledge and encouragement to:

- identify what parents need
- identify if what the school provides is meeting parents' needs
- help parents find out more about what the school has to offer their children.

Be positive

Principals can inspire positive talk about the school, from within the school, by:

- repeatedly emphasising to staff that they are influential members of the community and ambassadors for their profession (people often judge the whole education profession by the comments of just one teacher they know)

- highlighting the positive things being done at the school (teaching and support staff often have little idea about the fine work going on in other parts of the school)
- organising staff seminars on public relations (good public relations are everybody's business).

Reward those who talk positively. School leaders set the tone by giving compliments, passing on the appreciation of others, commending ideas and acknowledging extra time freely given. A major reason for job dissatisfaction is that staff don't feel appreciated for what they do.