

Parents 2 Teachers



by Susan A. DeLeGal, Chair

Who uses the Internet? Nationally, 85% of America is online. According to our own Wayne County Board of Education student survey in the Fall of 2001, approximately 74% of Wayne County Students had access to the Internet outside of school. A Spring 2005 survey with Boys & Girls Club parents in Glynn County determined that 94% of parents use the Internet at home and 85% use email. 92% wanted access to their children's homework assignments and class activities via the Internet. Now if those numbers at all relate to Wayne County families, our Internet usage has quite likely increased to similar percentages and we want more Internet communication between home and school. True, a few people still "aren't connected." But the Wayne County Public Library and the Jesup Career Center (Department of Labor) offer free usage of their computers to access the Internet and offer assistance on how to use the computers and Internet for beginners. The Jesup Housing Authority has a computer lab for their residents and there are programs underway to put computers into the community.

Communication is the key! When parents are informed and know what is going on in the classroom, there is more trust and understanding between school and home. One high school principal is quoted as saying that as much as 80% of the challenges that provoke a meeting between home and school could have been prevented if there had been better communication between home and school. Parent involvement is critical to success in education.

Let's look at this communication issue as a fire. In order for there to be a fire, there are three components that must be present: fuel, heat and oxygen. This is known as the triangle

of fire. Without one of the three, there is no flame. Same with communication. Teachers say they don't hear from the parents, that they aren't involved. Parents say they don't know what is going on at school. As progressive as our society is, and as much technology as is available to us, our communication skills are lacking. The experts say that if we don't use our brain, we lose it. Thus, the same holds true with communication skills. We must communicate to effectively increase our children's success in school.

Effective communication between home and school is like the triangle of fire. Picture this, the student on one side, the teacher on the second, and the parent/guardian on the third. Let's call this the combustible flame of education. Now if one of those sides of the triangle is absent, the fire is extinguished. Here's the theory. The student goes to school and the teacher teaches. The teacher tells the student what they are supposed to do, and in an ideal situation world the student does it.... not. In most cases it doesn't work that way. And since 70% of our child's week is spent outside of the school building what is missing here - the parent side of the triangle, therefore no flame and the child's education is not the success it could be.

The issue is that it is the parent's responsibility to see to it that their child goes to school, to raise them with the proper manners and morals to behave, to emphasize and teach what is important and what is not. In order for a child to succeed in life, they must have a good educational foundation. Here's where the parent comes in. If the parent and teacher are communicating about what is going on at school and what is expected of the student then they can help them and see to it that the student does the work, not to mention encourages them and helps them. To assist good parenting comes faith-based initiatives, after school programs at school and Boys & Girls Clubs, etc. When all parties communicate and work together, then comes communication, and parent involvement - there's the buzzword.

Teachers 2 Parents.Org, a non-profit organization offers tools to help teachers and parents communicate efficiently. Teachers 2Parents.Org formed a partnership with YourKidsHomework.Com to provide free online communication and training. YourKidsHomework.Com has proven success for over four years and in thirty states. YourKidsHomework.Com will launch it's new site for the 07-08 school year offering

much more security and ease of use. All communications are online, secure and do not rely on "iffy" email delivery.

Parents 2 Teachers.Org (the parent side of the equation) is working with local and regional groups to provide seminars for parents to learn the "hows and whys" of communicating with their children's teachers and schools. These seminars offer classes on email and the Internet as well. This alone can expedite needed communications and parent involvement. It is proven that effective parent involvement improves grades, improves attendance, and improves student achievement! The Jessup Housing Authority hosted these series twice for their residents and even gave away a computer as an incentive for attendance! Parents2Teachers.Org has sponsored a new support group for parents of students with disabilities and will be hosting seminars on disabilities, the laws on disabilities and how to work with the teachers when your child has a disability. The Boys & Girls Club has offered their facility to host these meetings and will provide childcare during the meetings.

The Internet holds many sources for help to parents. www.teachers2parents.org or www.parents2teachers.org have a Parents Corner link with links and resources for parent involvement. The Special Needs link has resources and references for parents of students with disabilities. www.yourkids homework.com is where you'll find school activities and homework. The school system's website is www.wayne.k12.ga.us and grades, schedules, attendance and discipline reports are on I-parent which is linked on the school system's website.

By no means do we suggest that the Internet take the place of meeting your teachers or meeting with your teachers at specified and scheduled times. Involved parents will meet the teachers, but won't need to meet near as often if they utilize frequent online communication. It is a very effective way to increase communication between home and school without disturbing schedules or teaching time, not to mention it is effective communication. **†WCM**

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