

IMPLEMENTING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Group 1—Grading Students with Disabilities

Assume you are an elementary teacher of a cross-categorical classroom that serves students with mental retardation, emotional/behavioral disorders, and learning disabilities. The students are included in general education classrooms for the majority of the school day. Some of the students are substantially behind their general education classmates and are working on totally different objectives during the general classroom period. Most of the general education teachers have a traditional view about grades and believe that all students should be graded according to the same standard. Some of the teachers even believe if you're not doing the same work as other students, there is no way that you should get a passing grade.

You have been asked to lead a discussion at the faculty meeting about options for grading. Prepare an agenda for (a) the points that you want to bring up with a list of the various options that you see, and (b) the pros and cons of each one. Give particular emphasis to options that can most meaningfully communicate to parents about the progress, strengths, needs, and preferences of their children with disabilities.

Group 2—Enhancing Communication Through Technology

Your early childhood program has been given a \$50,000 grant from a local computer company to upgrade its use of technology in teaching children and in building partnerships with their families. Your group has been charged with the task of bringing a proposal to the early childhood program's Board of Directors. The purpose of the proposal is to make recommendations on how a new technology system might build stronger partnerships between early childhood program professionals and families. What recommendations would you make? In your recommendations, make sure that you consider how you can incorporate the obligations of a reliable alliance and ultimately enhance the empowerment (motivation, knowledge/skills) of all potential stakeholders.

Group 3—Communicating Over the Telephone

Design a system for an early childhood program where families might have a regular call-in time to talk with the program staff or to ask questions. As part of this phone system, also consider how a regular voice mail program might be set up for families to leave messages for staff and vice versa, as well for program announcements for families.

As you consider this system, think about what family characteristics such a telephone system might empower and disempower. What supports could be provided to the families who might have potential disempowerment from this approach, to transform the approach into an empowering one for them?

Group 4—Using Cooperative Instruction to Develop a School Newsletter

Assume you are in a committee of middle school teachers who have the responsibility of developing a schoolwide newsletter to communicate school news to families. How can you use cooperative instruction involving students who are gifted, students with typical achievement, and students who experience significant learning problems?

What specifications would you want to keep in mind in terms of reading level and the languages in which the letter should be written? How could the obligations for a reliable alliance be incorporated into the newsletter communication?