

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course:	EDZU 9029 Dealing with Parents: Fostering Positive Relationships
Credit Hours:	3.0 credits / 45 hours
Instructor:	Michele Milgrim

Course Description

While standing up in front of a class of children and shaping their knowledge seems to be a regular and comfortable task for teachers, standing up in front of those same children's parents often is not. Many teachers are nervous, tense and uncomfortable speaking to parents at "Parent Teacher Night" and during parent conferences. It doesn't help that many parents seem to be in a state of denial about their child's behavior or abilities, sometimes even blaming the teacher for causing the misbehavior by singling out their child unfairly. Knowing what to say, and more importantly, how to say it can mean the difference between cooperation and confrontation. This class is designed for teachers in any grade level and in any discipline. In this class, we will discuss and develop the skills necessary to build effective communication with parents, tailor messages to the recipient, and interact with difficult parents under pressure. We will plan for parent/teacher open house events as well as individual parent conferences and written communication. We will investigate scenarios such as dealing with angry, confused, and apathetic parents as well as sharing unpleasant information.

Course Goals

To Know

1. How to reflect on their own practices to improve interactions with parents in the future.
2. How their own personality influences how they are perceived by parents.

To Understand

1. That all parents are different and require different approaches from their children.
2. That most parents want a better life for their child and may not know how to get it for them.

and To Be Able To

1. Engage in conversations with parents to promote not only a positive meeting, but a plan for the student's success in class.
2. Utilize various strategies for dealing with all kinds of parents and situations.
3. Provide parents with resources to help students outside of the school environment.

Course Outline

1. Dealing with Parents 101

- a. Participants will examine parental motivations by reviewing a history of parenting and school partnerships to determine possible motivations for current trends in parental expectations and behavior.
- b. Participants will explore different scenarios of parental motivation.
- c. Participants will investigate parental relationships within their own school district noting the basic level of parental involvement in their district.

2. Giving and Receiving Feedback

- a. Participants will scrutinize their own body language as well as reading the body language of the parents during conferences.
- b. Participants will consider the mechanics of different approaches for sharing student progress with parents
- c. Participants will study how miscommunication begins and develop personalized steps to avoid it.

3. Challenging Parents

- a. Participants will investigate best practices and develop tools for dealing with parents
 - i. Working with Pinocchio's Mom
 - ii. Working with the "Quit Picking on My Kid" Parent
 - iii. Working with The Intimidator
 - iv. Working with No Show's Dad
 - v. Working with Helicopter Mom

4. More Challenging Parents

- a. Participants will investigate best practices and develop tools for dealing with parents
 - i. Working with a parent and an IEP
 - ii. Working with Parents from Poverty
 - iii. Working with Parents from Wealth
 - iv. Working with Overprotective Parents
 - v. What to do when nothing works

5. Best Practices for Communicating with Parents

- a. Participants will collaborate on best practices for effective Parent Conferences
- b. Participants will collaborate on best practices for effective Parent/Teacher presentations
- c. Participants will collaborate on best practices for collaborating with the community

Methods of Instruction

Teachers enrolled in this course will evaluate primary and secondary sources, presentations and surveys of parents relationships and scenarios in order to better understand the factors that contribute to parent/teacher relationships. They will communicate with other teachers around the state and country to share success stories and gain insights into best practices in instruction. They will complete assignments

that assess their understanding of student success with regard to parents/teacher relationships and apply their learning immediately to their own classrooms, schools, districts and communities. They will complete progress plans, identify avenues for improving communications with parents, and create and implement plans for pedagogical change that they can bring back to their workplaces.

Students will connect with each other throughout the course within forums and various other types of online feedback options built into each class.

Methods of Assessment

In order to earn an A in class, a student must complete all of the assigned readings and assignments, participate in all discussion forums, and compete all of the assignments. In addition, they will (1) Evaluate their own communication practices in a one page paper specifically providing information on specific communication tactics, frequency of communicate with parents, an examination of the medium used regularly to communicate with parents, a specific plan for improving your communication with parents, and a specific plan of action to be implemented as soon as possible. (2) Research and discuss the methods for using technology to communicate with parents within the specific school/class/district.

In order to earn a B in class, a student must complete all of the assigned readings and assignments, participate in all discussion forums, and compete all of the assignments. In addition, they will (1) Evaluate their own communication practices in a one page paper specifically providing information on specific communication tactics, frequency of communicate with parents, an examination of the medium used regularly to communicate with parents, a specific plan for improving your communication with parents, and a specific plan of action to be implemented as soon as possible.

Instructors are online each day of the course and correspond with students through the course itself, feedback on assignments, e-mail, and by phone.

Time Validation

Assignment	Time (in hours)
Forum Discussion - Parenting 101	1.00
1.1 Journal - Parenting 101 - Students will review the resources provided and search for other relevant articles pertaining to the current state of parenting in the US and the changes in parenting styles over the course of the last 50 years. Participants will report on at least 3 specific references within the work that would really enhance your communication and relationship with parents in school and explain how they are helpful OR at least 3 specific references within the work that would "Blow up in your face" and detail why it wouldn't work. (You may also do a combination of references that are helpful or would blow up).	2.50
1.2 Parents of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow - After reading the article "History of Parenting Style" (Tracing Diana Baumrind's 3 Parenting Styles Through History!), Participants will examine the changes in parenting style and identify parents described throughout history in the article that are still relevant in today's society. They will create a chart or list of the types of parents that are typical at your school (or in your community, student teacher position, or neighborhood if you are not currently teaching). They will compare and contrast parents of past and present within the confines of the school district and try to use that information to predict the trend in parenting in the future. Finally, students will make a plan to better cope with the needs of parents both today and in the future.	2.50
1.3 Personal Scenario - Participants will identify a specific scenario from their own classroom experience that may be unresolved or handled in a way that is not what they might have hoped for. Participants will identify things that	1.00

worked well in the scenario and things that didn't go as well as planned. They will use this scenario to work with for the remainder of the course.

Forum Discussion – Feedback	1.00
Students will engage in a discussion of specific Parental behaviors that may be more frustrating to deal with. As a group, they will identify and attempt to explain each behavior identified including but not limited to Absent Parents, “helicopter” parents, and seemingly disengaged parents.	
2.1 Journal – Feedback - Participants will review the provided literature and research additional literature on giving feedback (emphasis on giving feedback to parents) and body language. They will Choose at least 3 specific references within the work that would really enhance your communication and relationship with parents in your school and explain how they are helpful OR at least 3 specific references within the work that would “Blow up in your face” and detail why it wouldn't work. (You may also do a combination of references that are helpful or would blow up).	2.50
2.2 Communication Results - Students will take an online quiz identifying strengths and weaknesses in their own communication style. They will then analyze the results, agreeing or disagreeing and make a plan for improvement or continued development for their own feedback and communication style.	2.50
2.3 Giving and Receiving Feedback - After reading the assigned resource on “Giving and Receiving Feedback” participants will research best practices to address the plan for communication results they created. They will use additional research on the internet to modify their plan and support the plan with research based initiatives.	2.50
S1 - Scenario 1 - Participants will watch 5 video scenarios of an interaction between a Teacher and a Parent. They will then identify, using the research provided what is really happening in the scenario. They will also analyze how the teacher responded and determine if the response was appropriate for their particular demographics or if it could be handled better. Finally, participants will provide “advice” for the teacher in the scenario with researched best practices for a more successful outcome. Participants will also respond to posts with research based suggestions and possible next steps.	2.50
S2 - Scenario 2 - Participants will choose a second of the 5 video scenarios of interactions between teacher and Parents. In this scenario response, the participant will discuss researched best practices on exactly what steps the teacher took to contain the situation and retain a positive outcome. Additionally, they will provide a review and guide for additional actions that could have been taken to reduce the stress and prevent the potential explosive parent. Participants will also respond to posts with research based suggestions and possible next steps.	2.50
3.1 Dealing with Parents Tips Review - Participants will examine “14 Steps to Teacher Assertiveness: How to cope with difficult parents, principals and staff members” by Mike Moore. In this summary of his article, the 14 Steps are individually listed and explained. Participants will browse the 14 steps. Many of the steps have the same theme. They support personal assertiveness and not allowing anyone to treat you in a manner that is inappropriate or unprofessional. Many teachers already apply a lot of these steps with students. Participants will identify and choose which of the 14 steps that would be most effective with parents in their district and why would parents respond better if teachers adopted and practiced this particular step. Then they will identify and choose which of the 14 steps do would be least effective with parents in the district and why wouldn't parents respond to this particular step behavior.	2.50
3.2 Scenario Review - After reading and responding all the Scenario 1 and 2 responses, Participants will review their own two Scenario responses amending their original conclusions, actions and possibilities. Students will also continue to modify their own Personal Scenario with parallels discovered in the Scenario assignments.	2.50
S3 - Scenario 3 - Participants will watch an additional (and different) 5 video scenarios of an interaction between a Teacher and a Parent. They will then identify, using the research provided to determine the validity of the request of the parent in the video. They will also analyze how the teacher responded and determine if the response was appropriate for their particular demographics or if it could be handled better. Finally, participants will provide “advice” for the teacher in the scenario with researched best practices for a more successful outcome. Participants will also respond to posts with research based suggestions and possible next steps.	2.50
S4 - Scenario 4 - Participants will watch the remaining 5 video scenarios of an interaction between a Teacher and a Parent. They will then identify, using the research provided the background of the parent request to try to determine the actual underlying message from the parent. They will also analyze how the teacher responded and determine if the response was appropriate for their particular demographics or if it could be handled better. Finally, participants will provide “advice” for the teacher in the scenario with researched best practices for a more successful outcome. Participants will also respond to posts with research based suggestions and possible next steps.	2.50
4.1 Enabling Parents - After reviewing research provided and conducting additional research on the internet, participants will Define what it means to “Enable”, identify how parents of today “Enable” their children, explain possible reasons why parents “Enable” their children, define and explain why enabling continue in a cycle. Additionally, participants will examine what might be done to deal with an Enabling Parent listing at least three specific plans of action for dealing with parents who enable their children.	2.50
4.2 Scenario Review - Looking through all the scenario 3 and 4 responses posted, participants will review and rethink about their own response and write a reflection including whether they would you change their own response? If so how? If not, why not (including research based rational). They will then list at least 2 additional ideas or comments	2.50

did other participants' make that interest you or made you think a little differently and identify the common theme in the responses.	
Forum Discussion - Best Practices - All responses to the "Personal Scenario" assignment from the first week will be posted here by the instructor (eliminating any identifying data). Participants will review these real-life and personal scenarios and use the resources provided in the course to provide research based advice and best practices.	1.00
5.1 Journal - Best Practices - Students will review the resources provided and search for other relevant articles pertaining to best practices for dealing with parental communication tools, open house preparation, parent conference preparation and contacting parents via technology. Participants will report on at least 3 specific references within the work that would really enhance your communication and relationship with parents in school and explain how they are helpful OR at least 3 specific references within the work that would "Blow up in your face" and detail why it wouldn't work. (You may also do a combination of references that are helpful or would blow up)	2.50
5.2 Reflection - Participants will examine all they have learned over the course and all the tips for dealing with parents, and consider what is the biggest challenge in dealing with angry parents, what strategy do might be most helpful when dealing with angry parents, describe and analyze a particularly difficult problem or parent that has been recently dealt with successfully, and what variables were responsible for the successful resolution of this problem.	2.50
5.3 Personal Scenario Revisited - Looking back at the "Personal Scenario" written in week 1 and the discussion of all "Personal Scenario" descriptions in the discussion forum, participants will identify and suggest tools accumulated and discussed that could deal with that scenario. They will identify specific phrases or actions that could be taken to rectify the scenario or produce a better outcome. They will also use the research to defend the current or possible scenario result.	2.50
5.4 Quiz - Participants will take a closing quiz about Parental involvement, communication and interactions in addition to the research provided in this entire class.	1.00
Total Time	45.00