

## Our Steps for Problem Solving

Solving problems away from the source is seldom fruitful. The district's communication plan has been designed to problem solve at the point closest to the problem.

When someone attempts to jump steps in the process the problem can immediately take more time and become more difficult to resolve. If you start communicating a step removed from the closest point of contact, you will be asked to return to the appropriate level.

- 1 Go immediately to the person who has direct contact with your child-the teacher.
- 2 Define the concern and seek to design steps to resolve the issue to provide for a positive learning climate. Write down the action plan stages and the roles to be played by the adults and the student.
- 3 If after a reasonable period of time there is concern that the problem persists, go to the second level-the principal. The principal will review the issue. Usually the parties will be brought together to determine common ground and set a plan of action in place.
- 4 If the issue has not been resolved at the building level it is appropriate to approach the superintendent. The superintendent will review the issue with all parties and make a determination.
- 5 If the problem still persists the final in-district resource is the Board of Education. The Board will review the record in executive session and will make a determination.
- 6 The final step for difficult issues is an

## Parent & Public Employee Due Process Rights

Due process is available to all parties during any communication or problem solving process. The right to due process is protected by law, as well as by regulatory and policy statements.

Individuals have the right to question the points at issue. When a problem arises there is no guarantee of anonymity or secrecy. **The district does not address issues raised in unsigned complaints or anonymous telephone calls.**

Privacy rights are important to everyone, especially when a child is involved. Records of individual employees and children will not be shared with unauthorized parties unless a signed release has been obtained.

**Written documentation is important.** Resolving problems frequently requires reducing the issues and the plan of action to writing. Written documents become part of the official record which is kept.

Individual student records and files are available to the parent(s) or any other agency provided for in law or regulation. Parents may challenge the contents of a file or record for purposes of accuracy.

Determinations are subject to appeal. In-district appeals go to the superintendent and then to the Board of Education. Out-of-district appeals are heard by the Commissioner of Education or an appropriate court of law.

When appropriate, individuals representing a party to an issue may be present for the review phase of the problem solving process.

## Rondout Valley Central School District

# EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR SCHOOL



**Effective communication has a positive impact on student learning.**

A Basic Guide For Parents

## “We are all part of a communication.”

Everyone recognizes the importance of quality communication links between home and school. Student success is dependent upon the communication which takes place throughout the school year.

**For all of its importance there is a tendency on all of our parts to not fully nurture the communication process for the improvement of instruction and learning.** Unfortunately, when a concern arises the lack of prior attention to detail is glaringly apparent.

A sense of urgency may arise within a child when the child experiences a problem in the home or school and the child is unable to correct the problem;

or,

A sense of frustration may be felt by a child having difficulty learning new subject material.

Left unattended the child may experience anxiety and adults will notice a change in the child's attitude or behavior as a means to draw attention to being in need.

There are times when parents and educators meet to determine a course of action and the final outcome will be determined by the quality of the communication which results from telephone calls or conferences.

If the focus on assisting the child is lost the communication becomes muddled. Finger pointing and unfounded accusations can be the end product. Not what anyone intended or wanted. To assist in achieving success everyone is asked to review the contents of this publication.

## THE ALL IMPORTANT FIRST STAGE

No one goes through life wanting or trying to continually fail. However, there are times when hurdles appear on our path through life. Some hurdles actually appear to be too high to clear without falling on our face in front of those we care most about.

During such difficult times we lose focus on what is essential to our children-understanding how to become a successful learner. We tend to address the surface issue of “why didn't I know there was a problem” instead of looking to what can be done to assist the child to be more successful.

The most crucial stage in communication is the first contact between the parties. If the communication is not about what can be done to positively work together for the child, the likelihood for helping the child to be a better learner is greatly diminished.

“The desired end product of home and school communication is a plan of action which positively addresses the needs of the child-not the adults.”

Great care should be exercised by everyone. The tone of all future communication between the parties is

set at the first stage. Asking questions of each other is very important. Making accusatory statements is detrimental to opening successful communication channels.

Anger from anyone has no place in successful communication. Anger expressed during a communication concerning a child is generally aimed at telling someone they do not have the best interest of the child as the central focus for successful learning to take place. What is said in anger is never forgotten and can not be taken back. An apology can not bridge the damage caused by words.

Keeping notes to be shared for future reference is very helpful. Complicated problems may require several different forms of communication over several meetings. To achieve the goal of helping the child it often

becomes necessary to refer back to what was the original intent of the initial decisions made at the earlier meeting(s).

Never make a statement which can not be later amended to meet the future needs of a child. A hard and fast stand may seem important; but, time frequently shows the best opportunity for the child is based upon an unforeseen circumstance or compromise. Nothing is absolute when parents and educators are working together to make the student a successful learner.

## FOCUS ON IMPROVEMENT

- ◆ Everyone always wants to improve opportunities for children to learn. In all instances people have to be open minded to recognize what is possible. The past teaches us to be better at what we do. Yet it is necessary to remember the ultimate break with the past allows problem solving which will improve learning.
- ◆ Be prepared to offer suggestions which will develop into focused solutions capable of optimizing meaningful involvement and input of everyone; including the child.
- ◆ No adult should suggest a course of action which allows the child to continue on a path which will not lead to eventual success for the child.
- ◆ The child's future success as a learner becomes the signpost of successful adult communication. The desired end product of home and school communication is a plan of action which positively addresses the needs of the child-not the adults.