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Happy Notes to Parents

A Point to Ponder



Most parents want to believe that they are doing a good job raising their children. Most parents are proud of their little angels. Most parents become threatened and maybe even a little defensive if someone suggests that their child is anything less than perfect. That is, of course, because they think that a less-than-perfect child is a direct reflection of their less-than-perfect parenting. **Parents love nothing more than to hear something good about their children.** Also, most children want their parents and teachers to be proud of them. Now let's bring these facts into the classroom.

Classroom Solution/Strategy



The strategy we are about to share with you is used in countless classrooms, always with amazing success. Here it is: **Send one note per class per day—one “happy note,” that is—to the parent/parents of a child in your classroom.** A happy note consists of wording along these lines:

Dear _____, I am so proud of your child, _____, for

_____. I knew you would be proud of her, too.

And that's it. Fill in the blanks, and sign your name. What many teachers do is photocopy these letters in order to have them ready at any given mo-

ment. Filling in the blanks takes all of about twenty seconds, yet its effect is far-reaching.

So let's say that you have a child who is behaviorally "challenged." We're sure you could find many reasons—legitimate ones—to write to her parents and give a litany of all that is wrong with this child's behavior. But before you do that, you may want to consider "catching" her behaving (as we'll discuss in more detail in #22) and seizing that opportunity to write a "happy note" to her parents. These kinds of notes almost always make it home and then onto the refrigerator! You were not dishonest as you did not claim that this child is always well behaved. Instead, you capitalized on a moment of good behavior and used it to help promote continued good behavior.

Now imagine that you send one of these notes, per class, per day to parents of your students. That means that every parent of every child you teach receives a positive note from you every month or month-and-a-half, depending on the size of your class. Even if it's every two months, that typically means more positive notes than these parents have ever received from their children's teachers!

Okay, so now you've established, through these notes, that **you are a teacher who notices good things about children and actually cares about the children you teach.** So when and if you ever do need to contact a parent about his child's misbehavior, he/she will be much more receptive to what you have to say. Again, no rocket science here. Just basic human nature!

Most importantly, **you will almost always see improved behavior from a student who notices that you notice good things about her!** This is a free and easy technique that will take, at most, one minute of your time, per class period, per day. This will be a minute well spent, as it will provide you with many more "minutes" of good behavior.

Bottom Line



By sending "happy notes" to parents, you will enhance relationships with parents, relationships with students, student behavior in general, and your own mood! Free, effective, and easy. **So, as an antidote, write a note and gloat, and better behavior you'll promote!**