

# WORKING WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS

*Students whose parents or guardians are involved in and supportive of their education have much greater chances of school and “real world” success. Young people may not do much to invite their parents’ involvement, so it’s up to you to reach out and find ways to bring parents into the educational process.*

## STEPS TO SUCCESS

1. Seek opportunities to meet students’ parents/guardians and find **ways to involve parents/guardians** (p. 15-2).
2. Explain your approach through an **introductory letter to parents/guardians** (p. 15-3).
3. Make the most of each **parent/guardian–teacher conference** (p. 15-4).
4. Prepare for and track your contacts with parents regarding student problems using the **Parent/Guardian–Teacher Contact Worksheet and Record** (p. 15-5).

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# TIPS

## TEN WAYS TO INVOLVE PARENTS/GUARDIANS

*Parental support is important to students, your program and FFA chapter activities. Even during the often-turbulent teen years, young people want the encouragement and approval of parents, guardians and other adults with whom they live. Here are some ideas for involving parents (the term used throughout this section to indicate biological parents and the other adults with whom students live).*

- Obtain the names and addresses of students' parents (use the *Student Information Form*, page 13-6). Contact them to introduce yourself and ask them to be partners in their child's learning. (The sample letter on page 15-3 may be useful.) Be sure to contact both parents separately if they do not live together but are both involved with the student.
- Personally invite parents to visit you during school open houses and parent-teacher conferences. Offer to be available at other times for interested parents who can't make the "official" conference times. (See tips for parent/guardian-teacher conferences on page 15-4).
- Support the local parent-teacher organization, and try to become involved in activities with your students' parents.
- Welcome parent volunteers in your classroom and during FFA activities. Identify short-term, one-shot projects they could help with—for example, a single evening supervising float building.
- Create take-home assignments that require interaction with parents, like researching the family's connection to agriculture or bringing a soil sample from home.
- Recognize that some adults are not comfortable in the school setting. Invite parents to help on field trips and events held in the community.
- Recognize that many families do not have both a mother and father in the home. Review all materials and presentations for parents to make sure they don't assume a two-parent household. Some parents won't participate in school events because they feel they're different from everyone else.
- Encourage parents to become involved in the FFA Alumni affiliate. (See Section 19, *Working with FFA Alumni and Young Farmers*.)
- Make parents true partners in their child's supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program. (See Section 10, *Supervised Agricultural Experience*.)
- Provide information, including brochures available from the National FFA Organization, that illustrates the breadth of careers related to agriculture.
- Salute parents at the annual FFA chapter banquet and other events. Mention their assistance with chapter activities in newspaper reports. Make sure they know you appreciate their help.

# INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

[Date]

[Parent/Guardian's Name]

[Address]

[City, State, ZIP]

Dear Ms./Mr. [last name]:

ABC High School agricultural education department is happy to welcome you and [your son/your daughter/student's name] to our program and FFA chapter. We believe you will find the curriculum provides a solid foundation that prepares students for both further education and career goals. The FFA chapter provides important (and fun) opportunities to develop leadership and other career-related skills. Each agriculture student is also asked to plan and complete an individual learning project called a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program.

Our agricultural education program thrives on parental support, and we hope you will participate in our many FFA activities and events. You can help prepare your student and others for successful futures by helping out as a guest speaker, chaperon, event judge – or in a hundred other ways. Please let us know if there are particular ways you would like to be involved. And, please say yes if at all possible when we ask for help with a specific project.

Copies of our curriculum outline and calendar of events are enclosed. We look forward to working with your student and you this year. If you have any questions about the program or chapter, please call [instructor's name] at [phone number].

Sincerely,

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Agriculture Instructor/FFA Advisor

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FFA Chapter President

# TIPS

## POINTERS FOR PARENT/GUARDIAN–TEACHER CONFERENCES

- Welcome parent(s)/guardian(s) to the conference. Shake hands and introduce yourself.
- Make sure you have the parent(s) “matched” to the correct student.
- Always start with a positive statement about the student—his or her warm smile, sense of humor, good manual skills, etc. Stretch your imagination for something if you have to!
- Summarize what your course has covered to this point. Point out the range of careers to which this learning applies.
- Indicate the grade the student has earned for the grading period.
- Indicate ways the student could improve future grades.
- Cover any concerns you have regarding the student’s specific behaviors or actions.
- If there are problems with out-of-class assignments, “fish” for indications of student work at home. Suggest an amount of time most students spend on your out-of-class assignments each day or week.
- Ask if parent(s) have any questions. Listen to their ideas and concerns.
- Redirect parents’ concerns to actions the student can take to improve learning and performance. Steer them away from critiques of your teaching.
- Thank parent(s) for coming. Give them your business card, and make sure they know they should feel free to call you with any questions.
- Keep a record of who participates in parent–teacher conferences. (There is room for this on the back of the *Student Information Form*, page 13-7).

# PARENT/GUARDIAN-TEACHER CONTACT WORKSHEET & RECORD

*Use this form to plan your contact with a student's parent(s) at the first sign of a problem.*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

**REASON FOR CALLING PARENTS:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**STATEMENT OF GOAL:**

I need your help in \_\_\_\_\_.

**STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES:**

Whenever I \_\_\_\_\_,

I need you to \_\_\_\_\_.

**RATIONALE:**

It is in \_\_\_\_\_'s best interest that we work together to \_\_\_\_\_.

**CONSEQUENCE:**

If \_\_\_\_\_ doesn't \_\_\_\_\_,

I will have no choice but to \_\_\_\_\_.

Mr./Ms./Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, thank you for your time. I believe \_\_\_\_\_

will benefit from our actions.

**FOLLOW-UP/RESULTS:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_