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RtI Family and Community Partnering: “On the Team and at the Table”

In closing:

We are both concerned about _____ and I am hopeful that we can work together to find out if this truly is a concern or not and how we can best support _____ in getting through/coping with this.

My goal is to be sure _____ is both academically and socially successful at school. We see a direct relationship between personal qualities, education and the world of work. I hope you can see me as a partner in supporting your son or daughter's success.

We have set a time to talk again on _____. Feel free to contact me before then with any ideas or suggestions. Please be aware that you have the right to ask for another meeting or a special education evaluation at any time. Thank you for your time.

IN CLOSING

Words: we, our, us

Goals: What do we want to achieve TOGETHER?

Roles: How can WE PARTNER around that?

Data: How will WE KNOW it is working?

Input: What does the family/educator/community resource THINK, FEEL, KNOW?

Decisions: Are WE ALL “on the team” and “at the table”?

Responsibilities: What are WE EACH doing?

Students: What is best for OUR students?

Partnering Vocabulary

Agree upon a plan of action at school and at home. A plan might include talking with the student about the issue, reading about the topic, changing a seat assignment. The plan should also include a time to check back in together (in a week or two) to discuss the effectiveness of the plan.

- Acknowledge that the parent has offered some good suggestions.
- Reflect back what the parent has shared so she/he knows she/he has been heard.
- Recognize the parent's emotion/reaction as valid.

If the parent is out of ideas, offer some suggestions:

- Share reading material around the concern and make a plan to discuss it.
- Offer websites, resources, and when possible, contact information for local support groups.
- Invite the parent to come observe their child and peers interacting at school.
- Move up the RtI flowchart with school resources beyond the universal level.
- Consider having another teacher/staff person in school have a conversation with the parent, particularly if the parent has a relationship with that person.
- Offer to discuss this concern in person with the parent and child to make a plan. (Include school counselor?)

JOINT PROBLEM-SOLVING

- Hello, Mr/Mrs. _____, this is _____. I am _____'s teacher/counselor. Do you have a few moments we could talk?
- If no: When would be a better time? (Try to get a specific time scheduled before you hang up—either via phone or in person, based on parent preference.)
- If yes: Start with a positive - unrelated to your concern.
 - _____ always has a smile on his face.
 - _____ comes prepared to school and eager to learn.
 - _____ is social/making many friends.
 - _____ has shown interest in _____ that we are studying.
- Then,
 - I have noticed some behaviors that I would like to talk to you about.
 - I have noticed some changes in behavior since the beginning of the school year/over the past month/weeks and I am concerned.
 - It seems that he/she is progressing/developing differently from what I would expect.

Phone call home: Build the Relationship

I would like to talk with you about this as a way to problem-solve together, to best support _____ in school and at home.

Briefly describe a situation or two which illustrate your concern. Identify the feeling and/or behavior. Make every effort to frame this in positive terms. Example: Instead of saying “He has become afraid of getting his hands dirty,” say, “I notice he is washing his hands ___ times a day compared to last month when he washed his hands ___ times per day.” (Be sure the concern is specific and backed up by data.)

Use reflective listing:

- I hear you may be anxious about this. I would be, too.
- I can understand this may be tough to discuss. Please know you are not alone
- Your reaction is very understandable. How can I be most supportive?

If the parent is receptive:

1. Have you seen any of these behaviors at home or in other settings?
2. Has anything changed in _____’s life lately that I may be unaware of? (Remember to encourage sharing of even small concerns: parents’ work schedule changes, visiting relatives/friends, rearranging of furniture/chores/new foods/meals, etc.)
3. Is there anything you would like to tell me that might help me understand what is going on for _____?

If the parent is not seemingly receptive:

Accepting that a child has a problem is a grieving process and it may take time for a parent to accept and be ready to form a partnership with you. If there are two parents, they might not be in the same stage of this process.

1. Give the parent time to think about it and/or talk with their partner. “Can I call you again this time next week/tomorrow?” You may need to try several times with the message of partnership.
2. Continue outreach to the family to engage in problem solving. Suggest school resources that may be available to support _____’s success.
3. The severity or escalation of the behavior will denote the timeline.
4. Be clear about concerns in follow-up contacts with family. Approach from a place of partnership:
I have continued to observe and document the behaviors over the past ___ (weeks/month). I am still concerned about _____ because: (list behaviors/differences in development, when, how often, how different, how it impacts the child in school, changes in original behavior).

What do you suggest we put in place either at school or home or both to try to resolve these things that are going on with _____?

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