

## 2. THE REACH PROCESS:

### COLLABORATING WITH THE STUDENT AND FAMILY

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### COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

- Create a partnership with parents. They can provide a vast amount of useful information.
- Learn to communicate opinions without stepping on toes; avoid blaming.
- Do **not** assume that the parents expect you to do the whole job, or make things easier for them.
- Help parents realize their role as a positive advocate for their child.
- Be sincere and available. Go out of your way to make conference times when both parents can be involved.
- Be honest and frank with yourself and with the parents when setting goals. Do not predict or promise unrealistic goals but give assurance of progress.
- Admit when you don't have the answers. Encourage parents to help work on solutions.
- Lay out student's problem in categories: problem area, strengths, needs improvement.
- Keep records. Report not only academic information, but social, behavioral, and spiritual growth, focusing on the whole child.
- Set realistic goals in consultation with parents/guardians.
- Review goals and strategies at least quarterly.
- Keep conferences and phone calls to specific concerns and a limited time frame. Maintain records.
- Hold conferences in school (teacher's territory).
- Parent/teacher conference guidelines:
  - Be specific, honest, and compassionate.
  - Have a clearly identified purpose.
  - State the problems clearly.
  - Explain what would be needed to achieve success.
  - Keep conversation focused on the desired subject.
  - Keep to a specific time limit. Give parents the final 5-10 minutes to discuss any additional concerns.

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### WAYS PARENTS CAN HELP

- Learn to build on student's strengths, while understanding and compensating for weaknesses.
- Remind your child that his/her disability/difference provides unique opportunities.
- Look for and celebrate incremental successes. Grades are not the best or only measure of success. Minimize competition.
- Model good behavior.
- Set realistic, individualized expectations.
- Learn about your child's disability.
- Contact sources such as Council for Exceptional Children. They publish a journal called Exceptional Parents.
- Join a parent support group or start one.
- Work with the teacher. Stay in close contact.
- Show affection. Let your child know that you love him/her. Give lots of hugs and affirmation.
- Listen to your child's frustrations and validate their feelings ("You're really upset." "That makes you angry.") Help them develop their own problem-solving skills.
- Discuss changes or problems that are affecting your children, such as relocation, blended families, unemployment, or peer put-downs.
- Use humor and empathy, rather than orders, anger, or sarcasm.
- Establish some daily routines for building security.
- Grant permission whenever possible. When necessary to say "no", communicate positively.
- Stay calm, but be firm. Give a limited number of directions.
- Exercise regularly and get adequate rest.

### EMPOWERING STUDENTS

We believe that learning should be personalized for all students. Learning should be centered around individual learner readiness, strengths, needs, and interests.

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All students should be active participants in setting goals, planning their learning experiences, tracking their progress, and determining how learning will be/has been demonstrated. At any point in time, learning objectives, content, method, and pacing are likely to vary from learner to learner. For more information regarding personalized learning please visit our REACH website at [www.nadeducation.org/reach/](http://www.nadeducation.org/reach/).

Students should: understand the importance of what they are learning, understand what is expected of them, expected to contribute to designing their learning experiences, and have a full understanding of the standards to be met as well as their progress towards meeting the standards. If all students are valued as active participants in their learning experiences, the framework for discussing concerns and developing a course of action should be already in place. Here are a few helpful tips for communicating with students who are not progressing as expected:

- Review and discuss progress regularly with the student
- Share strengths
- Share your concerns in an honest and constructive manor
- Listen to the students' concerns
- Listen to the students' understanding of why the challenges may exist
- Listen to the students' suggestions regarding what might be helpful with regards to instruction, the setting, etc.
- Plan together the next steps
- Discuss additional interventions and/or instructional strategies to pursue
- Discuss further assessments that may be needed

## IMPLEMENTING INTERVENTIONS AND STRATEGIES

### IDENTIFY AND UTILIZE INTERVENTIONS AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Success for the students with learning challenges requires a more intentional focus on individual achievement, individual progress, and individual learning. For those students who are struggling a more specific, directed, and intensive instruction may be needed.