

Changing the Way We Communicate with Schools

by Tim Webster, Principal
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What is the single most important factor in determining student success in school? Some think it is the teachers, the administration, the extra curricular activities, the facilities, or how good the school is in general. While good schools and staff are important, the research shows that the parents' attitude toward education is the single most influential factor in determining whether or not a student will be successful in school. As teachers and administrators, we are aware of this fact, and we try to give parents as many opportunities as possible to be involved and encourage their child. **We feel that parent communication with schools is a key ingredient in helping parents to be involved and maintain a positive influence on their child's education.**

The way we communicate is changing. This school year in Reed City we have incorporated a new student records data base called Skyward. Skyward is used by teachers for recordkeeping, more specifically grades and attendance. This new program also has the availability for parents to log in and check on their child's progress at any time. Parents can check current and past grades, missing assignments, attendance, tardiness, discipline and more all from their personal computers. We have received many positive comments from parents who are familiar with the new system. To get set up, just call your child's school office to get your user name and password and log on to "Family Access" on the Reed City Area Public Schools' web site (www.reedcity.k12.mi.us).

Our District Home Page is a relatively new form of communication. It contains a large variety of information. It has information about each building, the board of education, a calendar for each building, sports schedules and information – administrative information, school closing information, and much more. Check it out at the previously-cited web address when you get a chance.

We continue to do traditional communications as well. At all grade levels, teachers have a "conference period" during the day. Conference periods are used to prepare daily lessons, grade papers, maintain records, and, when needed, to contact parents, receive phone calls, or meet with parents to discuss their child. All teachers also have voice mail and e-mail to aid in communication. Parents are encouraged to come in or call during prep time at any time of the year. All buildings send out periodic newsletters to keep parents informed. Newsletters are also posted on the district web site.

As students get to be about middle school age through high school, they generally want parents to stay away. We know students need room to work toward independence, but parents need to stay involved. I hope this article encourages parents to stay involved and offers ideas, both new and old, on how to achieve involvement in a way that fits their needs. We know that the best recipe for the academic success of our students is parents working together with schools.