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Chapter 3 Assignment

Generate at least seven additional practical ways (one for each of the seven roles) for classroom teachers to support parents in the seven different roles of parents as defined by this chapter. How will your ideas help, support, or impact your families? Include references to our text.

Parents play many roles other than “parent”. Our text identifies 7: Nurturer, adult, individual, worker, consumer, community member and educator. There are many ways teachers can support parents in each of these roles.

One of a parent’s most important roles is that of a nurturer to their child. Teachers can help support parents in this role by being highly responsive to children when their parent is not present. When a child is in a classroom, the teacher often plays the role of nurturer. They can pay special attention to children who may have attachment difficulties when their parents drop them off for school and they can also help by creating a comforting, safe environment for the child when away from their parents. This can help the child develop healthier attachment not just when going to school, but when going to other activities as well.

For most parents, the relationship with their child one of (if not *the*) most important relationship in their life. However, parents are individuals and they are more than “just a parent”. Adults need to have healthy, fulfilling relationships with people other than their children. Teachers can develop friendly relationships with the parents of their

students, being supportive of them, participating in small talk that includes topics other than the child, and getting to know the parent as an individual. This can help the parent feel more connected with others, and help them deal with the isolation that can sometimes be a part of being a parent. However, it is important to remember the difference between being friendly and being friends. Maintaining a professional relationship is paramount.

Parents are individuals with individual thoughts, feelings, ideas, and life experiences. They are not defined completely by the fact that they are a parent. Teachers can help support parents as individuals by being understanding when the parents seem to be forgetful- picking their child up late, forgetting a classroom rule, or seeming uninvolved in classroom activities. As a teacher it is easy to be annoyed by these mistakes, but it is important to remember that each parent is different and there may be understandable circumstances that cause these problems. When teachers demonstrate empathy it can help lower stress in a parent's life and in the lives of other family members as well.

The role of worker is an essential role in the life of many adults, including parents. Work is a necessary part of adult life, but it often complicates parenting. Teachers can support parents as workers by working to stay connected to parents and let them know what is going on in the classroom. Even with open visitation hours and conferences held after work hours, as it suggests in the text, some parents are still simply unable to make it. Weekly or monthly classroom newsletters, emails, or a class website can keep parents connected with what is going on in their child's classroom. Additionally, a note home or occasional phone call about their child's progress can help

a parent understand what is going on in the classroom and develop a relationship with their child's teacher. This can help ease some of the stress and guilt that comes with being a parent who has to work long or unusual hours.

In addition to being nurturers, adults, individuals, and workers, parents are also consumers. Raising a child is expensive, and child care is one of the largest expenses parents have. Our text refers to the "trilemma" parents face- *"Parents can't afford the cost of high quality care, quality child care suffers from turnover due to inadequate wages, and low wages provide a hidden subsidy for parents."*¹ As a child care worker this can sometimes be a difficult role to support. As the text states child care workers provide a hidden subsidy for parents by working for low wages, which often leads to turn over. All teachers are consumers themselves and need decent wages to support their own families. However teachers can help support parents by showing parents what they are paying for. Teachers should demonstrate that their students are receiving high quality care by, of course, always providing high quality care but also staying connected with parents about the curriculum, activities in class, and their child's development. While this might not ease the financial burden placed on parents, it can ease some of the stress of that financial burden.

Parents are also community members. Many parents have obligations in addition to their families or their jobs in the community. They are pulled in many directions with their different obligations; they *"face constant tension between outside demands on time and energy and the amount available for personal and family needs"*.¹ Teachers can support parents as community members by providing a variety of times for parents to be involved in the classroom. Some parents might never be able to make it to the

classroom on a Wednesday afternoon, but they could easily make it on a Friday morning. If teachers give parents options, they can more easily handle all of their responsibilities.

Parents are also educators. Although the role of teachers in a child's life is vitally important, their ultimate teacher is their parent. Parents teach socialization, academics and many other important lessons. Teachers can support parents in the role of educator by letting parents know specifics about what their children are learning in class. If parents know "today we talked about the letter E" they are able to support that learning at home, also talking about the letter E. This not only helps the parent, but the child as well, enriching their learning.

Works Cited

¹ Gestwiki, Carol. *Home, School & Community Relations*. 8. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2012. Print.