

The Parent-Teacher Partnership

Sally Goldberg, Ph.D.

Q. By working hard and sending my child to childcare, I often feel disconnected. Is there a way to feel more connected with my child and with what goes on in the center?

A. Yes, there are many ways for parents and caregivers to work together. These ideas will make you feel better as you leave your child in someone else's care, and they will also help your child feel better as well. Here are some suggestions:

1. Explain to your child how much you like and respect the caregivers and that you know that they take good care of him/her.
2. Build a relationship with your child's caregivers and then explain that relationship to your child. It will help your child to feel secure if he/she knows that you know and like each other.
3. Set up a consistent communication system with your child's caregivers. It can be a regular time each week to meet and talk or it can be a written report that you each send back and forth to each other daily. It could also be some combination of the two. This communication is very important because it allows both of you to learn more about the child than either one of you would know on your own.

During each year of childcare the focus of the partnership should be different. Here are some guidelines.

First Year – A Focus on Milestones of Development

Your baby is rapidly moving through many different stages of development. Physically, there are many changes starting with holding up the head, pushing up, rolling over, sitting up, crawling, and then walking. There are also many new social interactions and evidences of learning and language growth that take place. During this year it is recommended that caregivers report often to parents about their baby's development. They should also inform parents about upcoming milestones so that parents can be ready to catch them when they happen. If parents know what to expect, they might even be able to guide their baby through certain accomplishments. Whenever you see a new aspect of development, even the smallest one, your parent pride will shine through. Each acknowledgement means a lot to your child. If you have a baby in childcare, be sure to ask for this kind of guidance.

Second Year – A Focus on Exploring

Your toddler is busy learning how the world works. "On the move" describes this time. Just by getting around he/she is learning many simple concepts like in and out, front and back, and top and bottom. He/she points at objects of interest and performs actions to get a result. During this year it is helpful for caregivers to suggest to parents appropriate play activities that will be fun and also enhance this exploratory stage. Feel free to ask for this type of play advice.

Third Year – A Focus on Routine

Between the ages of two and three your child is making the transition to normal daily schedules. Some parts of the routine take place in the childcare center, and other parts take place at home. It is a good idea to coordinate so that one major routine flows from morning until night. Eating, sleeping, playing, and educational stimulation are all part of the picture. A parent can share home information by writing a note. Caregivers can provide center activities with newsletters, calendars, and also by sending home notes.

If possible, seek out parenting classes, parent workshops, or parenting information. Some may be available at your child’s center. Most caregivers are quite knowledgeable about parenting and will be happy to answer your questions. The more knowledgeable you become about taking care of children the better able you will be to provide the most optimal home environment for your child.

While many parents would prefer to provide the major care for their own children, especially during the infant-toddler years, today’s lifestyle often does not allow it. Therefore, learning to work effectively with caregivers in a partnership is the best alternative we have for helping children grow and develop well.

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Sally Goldberg, Ph.D., is a professor of education at the University of Phoenix and parenting specialist. Through her books, articles, presentations, and one-on-one coaching she empowers parents to solve problems. She gives weekly parenting classes in different locations in Scottsdale, AZ. If you would like to contact Dr. Sally, you can reach her at 480-766-6323 or drsally@drsallyparenting.com. Find out more at www.drsallyparenting.com.
