

Perceptions: Improving Communications

Everyone—families, school staff, and early learning professionals—has the same goal for the child—school success! However, sometimes the words or actions used can be confusing for others in identifying components of the situation with the child.

Teachers and families may have different perceptions of how the child learns. Most teachers realize how important it is to communicate with families, yet they may feel frustrated in their efforts to communicate. Families may also feel frustrated in their conversations with the school. Each of the views below, although may be different, are valid and are important to what might be seen in a child’s learning experience.

	Teacher’s View	Family’s View	What might be seen in the child
Knowledge and Development	Has knowledge of what child has mastered	Is concerned with what child is learning	Play is learning
	Is concerned with present development of child	Has the perspective on how far the child has come.	Eager to demonstrate new skills
	Looks for one best method, way to work with all children	Wants to have child approached and taught as an individual	Child learns from a variety of experiences and sources
	Is concerned with mastering specific skills	Tends to see who child’s ongoing development	Progression of specific skills that builds upon earlier learning
Social and Emotional	Sees child more abstractly, able to distance self from child	Has emotional involvement with child.	Develops healthy relationships with peers and school personnel
	Must focus on the whole class or group	Is concerned with own child’s individual progress or needs.	Adjust to new environment
	Looks to what the child will be able to do in the future	Is concerned the here and now	Explores different opportunities for social experiences

The below example is a way to demonstrate the teacher’s point of view, validate the family’s point of view, and demonstrate what might be seen in the child. Example conversation between teacher and family member:

Teacher: Through my experiences with your child, I’ve been able to see what he has mastered. I also understand that you are concerned with what your child is learning. We can see he is learning through his actions when he plays. His play is actually a very good way for him to process what he is learning! Can you share some of your concerns about what he is learning?