State Of Michigan

Positive Phone Calls Home

August, 2013

Teachers' perceptions of their students positively or negatively influence how students view themselves. Research shows that "parents of African American children were more likely to receive negative contact from schools and less likely to receive positive contact." [1] During two focus group sessions of African American males in Michigan, students cited instances where a teacher taking a personal interest in them, not giving up on them, and holding them to high behavior and academic performance standards made a positive difference in their attitudes and efforts. [2] If African-American males are to be successful in school and as adults, then teachers need to help their students "see themselves as young men with limitless opportunities and possibilities" (Kafele, 2009, p. 15).

The Positive Phone Calls Home intervention is a concrete way in which classroom teachers can foster academic growth and personal self-esteem among African American males. These intentional calls home with positive comments, describing what the student is doing well, when he is trying, and when he is learning can have a profound impact. Calling home should have the added benefit of developing positive parental involvement with the school, which has been associated with increases in academic achievement.

Positive phone calls home will also likely inform parents of their child's accomplishments and increase parents telling their students they did a good job and that they are proud of something they did. Research shows that the more often parents of African American males complemented and expressed pride in their children, the better the children preformed in school.

Why choose Positive Phone Calls Home?

★ To foster academic growth and personal self-esteem among African American males.

★ To increase the probability that parents will compliment and express pride in their children's accomplishments.

★ To increase parental engagement.

The Power of making Positive Phone Calls Home…

Given the favorable influence positive interactions between teachers and students can have on students' social-emotional and academic growth, regular positive calls home communicates teachers' personal interest and respect for their students' success.

Positive Phone Calls Home

Guide to Climate & Culture Implementation

1. Establish a regular schedule when you will make positive calls home so that parent or guardi an will know to expect your call.

2. Read more about how one teacher customized her use of this strategy at http://www.edutopia.org/blog/power-positive-phone-call-home-elena-aguilar

3. Let student know that you plan to make positive calls home and seek his assistance to ensure you have correct contact information.

4. Begin the phone call by telling the parents you have some good news to share about their child.

5. To the degree possible, try to avoid critical calls altogether.

6. Be specific about what you observed and then describe what you see as the benefits the student is experiencing as a result of what the student is doing.

7. Include information about your school and classroom learning goals and objectives to ensure parent or guardian is aware of what the student is working on.

8. Be respectful and professional by showing appreciation for the parent's contribution and the complexity of raising a child, If a parent or guardian asks, be prepared to share ways they can support the positive behaviors at home.

9. Follow-up with the student to make sure he is aware that you made the positive call home.

Elements of Fidelity:

- Identify African American male students whose parents will receive regular positive phone calls home.
- List the names and phone numbers on the "Call Home" log provided.
- Talk to student to get contact information if phone number changes.
- Fill in time, date, and person contacted after each call.
- Briefly describe parent/guardian response to the call on the "Call Home" log.
- Note any positive changes in student behavior, attendance and/or academic achievement that might be evidence of the impact phone calls home.
- Check-in with student to confirm he is aware of the positive phone call home.
- Ensure pre– and post- surveys, provided by MDE, for student, parent, and educator are completed.