If only you would listen to what I say:
Engaging parents of school-age children
BEGINNINGS
for Parents of Children who are
Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Dr. Joni Y. Alberg, executive director
Johanna L. Lynch, parent educator
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“Studies show that 75 percent of oral communication is ignored or misunderstood.”

*Kangan Institute, 2007*
“In medical consultations, patients are likely to retain only 50% of what a physician has told them. Furthermore, only about half of the information they retain is remembered correctly. So we can expect patients to recall correctly about 25% of what we have told them.”

Yanz, 2006
“Spend at least as much time listening as you spend talking.”

J. L. Yanz, 2006
How to engage parents

- Talk to them
- Ask questions
- Listen to the answers
Even rarer than understanding what is being communicated is the ability to listen for the deepest meaning in what people say, so you understand what is really going on.

Kangan Institute, 2007
Don’t make assumptions

• We all bring our own history to the table
• We cannot assume each parent is the same
• Just like each child has different needs, each parent, each family has different needs
• Get parents to communicate their needs
• What are the challenges parents face?
What are the barriers?

- Language
- Cognition/understanding
- Cultural
- Time
- Distance
Consider solutions

- Interpreters/translators
- Explain information
- What do they believe to be the issues?
- Find a time that works for them
- Transportation
Meet them where they are

- After-school activities
- Evening socials
- Activities for teacher work days/track out
Mutual respect

• Value each other’s time
• When a parent asks to meet, ask about their concerns so you can be prepared
• Don’t interrupt
• Follow-up
Remember, we’re partners

- Our relationships are not adversarial by nature
- Nurture strong, trusting relationships
- Do what you say you’re going to do
Encourage participation

- Invite parents, and really mean it
- Ask them to spend time in your school
Think outside the lines

- If they don’t have transportation, figure out a way to get them there
- Reach out to the community for volunteer support
Work closely with PTA

• Encourage your PTA to have exceptional children’s committee

• Work with your PTA to sponsor social, educational events
Stay connected

- Communicate frequently with parents
- Newsletters, social media, telephone
- Know the languages spoken at home so you can communicate effectively
Share ideas

• Provide parents with ideas for encouraging their children

• Parents may not fully understand their child’s needs but they know their children better than we do
Embrace parents

Parents are the best resource we have to improve educational outcomes for our students.

Cultivate a community in your school and you’ll reap the rewards.