

Tic-Tac-Toe: Interactive Goal Setting with Families

Parents and teachers must work together to ensure student academic progress. Students work harder when they know teachers care about them and they have the support they need in school and at home. Communication between teachers and families is very important and is key to making this progress happen; everyone should be included in this process and commit to a common goal.

We need to know our students, establish clear objectives for them, and provide families with the information and tools they need to help their child at home. In order to have effective communication, we need to keep in mind that families have different ways of communicating and it must be the families who decide what kind of communication works best for them. Communication in between parents and families should happen from the beginning of the school year, continue throughout the year, and it should be clear, positive and useful.

This document includes ideas for beginning communication with parents. They have shown effective results, helped improve communication with all families and most importantly, they have established a team work environment with great student progress as a result. Although this takes a lot of effort, it really pays off in the long term!

1. Before starting the school year, have a short meeting with the former teacher of your students and share strengths and struggles of students. From that conversation, think about one **goal** to work on with that particular student.
2. Plan a home visit (if possible do the home visit before the school year starts).
3. Home visit:
 - a. At the home visit, let parents know you have a plan for their child already in mind (**1st goal**) you can let them know you met with their teacher from the year before and you have thought about a goal you would like to work on with that particular student. In some cases, you can suggest resources for them to use at home. Parents really appreciate this and it makes them feel you are aware of their child's needs and you care about their child's progress.
 - b. Ask parents to think about a **2nd goal** for their child. At this time, you can give suggestions and invite them to be part of the "team"; you will all work towards this goal.
 - c. When you are ready to end the home visit, ask parents if you can take 2 pictures: one of the family and the other one of you and your student. Kids and parents enjoy taking the picture; it ends the home visit with a nice warm feeling. The purpose of the pictures is to create a video of the families you visit.

4. Once you have the pictures from all the home visits you did, **create a video** with them. There are many apps you can use, such as "Animoto," but computers also have different ways to easily create nice videos.
5. Present the video to the parents at the "Back to School Night" meeting or at a beginning of the year event where you know you will have a large amount of parents attending.
6. On the 1st week of school, when you work on hopes and dreams with your students, introduce the **"Tic, Tac, Toe"** goal activity to your students. Read a book to students about how determination and hard work allows anyone to achieve goals. In the book, the character tries many different things but in the end, she realizes that a one single goal and lots of perseverance makes it happen.
 - a. Ask students to think about a goal they want to set for themselves, this goal should be measurable and it should be realistic. An example of a good goal could be (in 4th grade), know multiplication facts all the way up to 12. If your student thinks a good goal is to read a large amount of books in a week, you might want to ask them what it is that they want to improve, how you can monitor their progress and how you can help them to reach their goal.
 - b. Once they have decided what their goal will be (**3rd goal**), share with each student in private, the goal you have set for them (1st goal) and remind them about the goal their parents had set for them as well (2nd goal). Now you have 3 goals for your students to write on their **"Tic, Tac, Toe"** goal sheet.
 - c. Save the **"Tic, Tac, Toe"** sheets for the "Back to School Night" meeting.
7. On that 2nd week of school, have students write a letter to their parents. In this letter, students should share thoughts about their class so far and the goal they have set for themselves. Save these letters for the "Back to School Night" meeting as well.
8. Usually, the "Back to School Night" meeting is around the 3rd week of school. By this time you should have 3 things ready: home visit video, **"Tic, Tac, Toe"** goal sheet and letter from students.
 - a. Start the meeting by sharing the video; you want to make a point with the video: family is important and each one of my students is very important to me.
 - b. After the video, allow a couple of minutes for parents to read the letters from their child and then ask them to review the "Tic, Tac, Toe" goal sheet. Remind them the 3 goals were set by the "team": teacher, parents and students.
 - c. This day is important because you let parents know how things work in your classroom, what your expectations are, but most importantly that you have a plan for each student in your class. After watching the video, reading the letters, checking out goals sheets, and getting all the information from you, parents will



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leave the meeting knowing you care, you are prepared, their child is in good hands and you will all have a good year.

9. During the year if you see the goal was accomplished, take a picture of the piece of work that shows it was met or take a picture of your student "in action". Record in your notes when it happened. Since you have many students, you want to keep track of their progress and you want to share this progress with parents. It also helps remind you that new goals need to be set.
10. Send a note to the parents with good news!
11. In the classroom, make a small copy of the picture you took of the students work, cover the piece of the **"Tic, Tac, Toe"** where the student wrote that particular goal. They will be motivated to cover the 3 goals and they will work hard to make it happen. This will also encourage them to keep moving forward.
12. Once the 3 goals are meet, send a certificate of accomplishment to the parents. Make an announcement to the class! Celebrate.
13. Revise: it might be time to set new goals and meet with parents again.

Goals can also be set from data recorded from APTT meetings. This work takes time, it's a process and it's done throughout the year; and the best part, looking back and seeing the progress of your students, is the best reward. It can be done!

Artifacts attached:

1. **"Tic, Tac, Toe"** goals sheets (4 different options for students to pick)
2. Good news slips (share goal accomplishments)
3. Ongoing communication tracking sheet

My 1st trimester goals

		
		
		

Name: _____

My 1st trimester goals

		
		
		

Name: _____

My 1st trimester goals

		
		
		

Name: _____

My 1st trimester goals

		
		

Name:



GOOD NEWS

September, 2015

Dear _____,

I hope you are doing well. I wanted to share with you....

Best regards,

Teacher's signature



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Dear _____,

I hope you are doing well. I wanted to share with you....

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