



COMMUNICATING & CONNECTING WITH FAMILIES

While you spend most of your time with their child, you also play a critical role in communicating and connecting with parents on a week by week basis.

All parents enjoy hearing encouraging words about their children! Be sure to share a highlight or something specific that their child enjoyed or did really well with during their time at Heartland.

At times you may need to talk to a parent about a concern you have with their child. Here are a few tips about sharing any concern:

- **Don't wait.** No parent wants to hear months down the road that you've had a concern about their child that wasn't addressed with them.
- **Speak privately.** Never begin a conversation in front of the child, if possible. You can ask another volunteer or staff person for help with the child while you speak with the parents.
- **Be kind and candid.** If you've recognized the child has had a difficult day, be candid about the behaviors or difficulties you observed. Speak in a kind way. Assure that you care for the child and want his/her experience to be enjoyable and meaningful.
- **Ask the parents for their thoughts and suggestions.** Oftentimes, the behavior we see at church is one they also see at home. The parent may offer ideas that have worked for them.
- **Ask for help when needed** from Michelle or another Heartland staff member.

Don't forget to check-in and see how the parents are doing as well! Having a child with special needs can be difficult at times. Make sure every parent is greeted warmly, and don't forget to ask how they are doing too. Showing you care not only about the child, but also about the entire family can make such a difference!

