Getting Parents Involved

by Vickie Butts and Patty A. Finch

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getting parents involved in the educational process is a goal of most teachers. Achieving that goal is not always easy, particularly in a school without a history of parental involvement. The barriers to such involvement may be economics, language, cultural difference, or lack of communication.

Reading and Writing and Pets

Perhaps more so than in other subjects, fostering a student’s love for reading and writing is more likely to see these activities as worthwhile. Parents can listen in as the child reads to Clifford; and except in cases of language differences, read a story or two aloud themselves.

Parent-Child Teamwork

A visit from Clifford is a chance for parent and child to work together. He comes with a bag full of Clifford’s own books, including such titles as Clifford, The Small Red Puppy; Clifford, The Big Red Dog, and Clifford’s Good Deeds. For some families, the visit is a catalyst to a new or previously forgotten sharing of books between parent and child. The parent can

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Clifford also comes with an impressive collection of pet items donated by generous students. The collection is kept in Clifford’s own bag and includes food and water dishes, a leash, and grooming brushes.

Once Clifford leaves the classroom with his temporary host, he becomes “real” in a sense for the youngster with whom he is staying. Like a real pet dog, he needs to be fed, watered, groomed, sheltered, and loved. Clifford provides parents and children with an opportunity to discuss responsible pet care, as learned about in the classroom.

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During the school year, each of Carole Bruce’s students takes a turn caring for Clifford at home. The presence of the endearing stuffed toy dog is a “surprisingly successful motivational tool,” observes Carole. Clifford’s visits are preceded by a letter to parents asking their cooperation and help with the project. The letter explains that the children have been instructed to keep their guest brushed and clean, to provide a safe place for him, to read to him, and to keep a journal about the times the two of them share together. If the letter isn’t read, the child is sure to tell the parents about it anyway!

Your Own Clifford

Clifford provides wonderful companionship and an opportunity for both parents and students to learn about pet care. In addition, youngsters who would like to have a pet of their own welcome the chance to work together. Six-year-old authors of a new four-legged addition to the family. “Don’t know if Clifford has his own” provide a pet of their own welcome the chance to work together. Six-year-old authors of a new four-legged addition to the family. “Don’t know if Clifford has his own writing and talking.”

It’s apparent that students take their job as host quite seriously. A visit with a new four-legged addition to the family, “I don’t know if Clifford has his own writing and talking.”

About the author: Vickie Butts is education director of the Humane Society of Jefferson County in Jefferson, Wisconsin.

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