

The Teacher as a Dental Team Member

Classroom teachers at the elementary school level have a special relationship with their students. You often know these children in ways their parents have not yet discovered.

Dental disease can be devastating to a child's well being and learning environment. Being in pain can create barriers to learning that can be rectified with teamwork between the teacher, parents, school nurse, and a dental professional.

The signs of dental problems can be in many forms. Pain is often displays by facial expression while at rest, play or during eating. Children will not always verbalize their pain, for many reasons. Teachers are often the best friends in a child's life who can pick up on subtle changes in behavior that result in an early identification of dental pain.

Dental problems can also be developmental and environmental in nature. Thumb sucking and improper tooth alignment can create problems with speech and self-esteem. These issues can be corrected and it is best to identify them early. Do not assume that the student receives regular dental care or consideration of these signs and issues by the parent. If you suspect limitations of this nature are present, do not hesitate in asking the school nurse to discuss this aspect of your student's health with the parents, in order to obtain professional dental care for the child.

We appreciate all you do for your students. Thank you for bringing dental information into the classroom curriculum. We hope this resource manual assists your educational endeavors. We value you being a valuable member of the team that is attentive to your student's dental needs.