

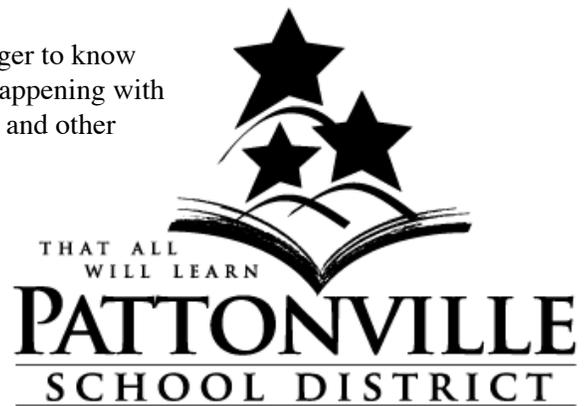
COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR TEACHERS

1. COMMUNICATE EARLY AND OFTEN.

Teachers have a built-in audience in the form of parents, who are eager to know what is happening in the classroom, and more specifically, what is happening with their own children. Provide frequent communication on these topics and other important issues, weekly if possible.

2. OPEN THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION.

As school starts, send home a letter of introduction to your parents, letting them know a little about you and ways they can keep in touch with you. Provide important phone numbers, web site addresses for homework assignments (if applicable), your e-mail address and other important information. Make them feel welcome in approaching you on matters related to their children. Let them know what to expect in the coming year and what types of things their children will be learning so they can reinforce those lessons at home.



3. COMMUNICATE FACE-TO-FACE AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE.

The more difficult the situation you're talking about, the more important it is to do your communicating face-to-face. In the Hierarchy of Effective Communications, one-to-one, face-to-face communication is ranked No. 1 for being most effective, followed by small group discussion/meetings (2), speaking before a large group (3), and a phone conversation (4).

4. PROVIDE QUICK RESPONSES. ANTICIPATE QUESTIONS.

Return e-mail and telephone messages within 24 hours. Even if you cannot provide immediate answers to a question, return the call to let that person know that you will have to get back with them. This will eliminate frustrations and misunderstandings.

5. SHARE THE GOOD NEWS.

Call or e-mail parents and let them know if their child has done something good, made a significant improvement or is simply just doing a consistently great job. Send home notes indicating the same. Don't let the only contact you have with a parent be when something goes wrong. Develop a positive relationship with parents up front so that, should something negative happen, you have a good basis from which to start your discussions.

6. SHARE THE GOOD NEWS, PART II.

If you've got something great going on in the classroom, if you're doing something new, unique or different, contact community-relations (via e-mail or phone - internal extension 1025) and let us know about it so we can share the good news with our community. If you have a special event coming up, let us know about it two to three weeks prior to the event so that we can give proper notice to the news media if appropriate.

7. BE AN AMBASSADOR FOR YOUR SCHOOL AND YOUR DISTRICT.

Understand that what you say to friends, neighbors and people in the community has an impact on how well the district is perceived. An Education Week article stated that more than 70 percent of parents say they rely on personal observations and conversations and not the local news media to gather information about their local schools. As an employee of the district, you are considered by people you know as an expert on what is happening in Pattonville, so it's critical you know all the facts and speak accurately about the district.

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8. PROVIDE COURTESY AND GREAT SERVICE TO ALL THOSE YOU COME IN CONTACT WITH (PARENTS, STUDENT AND COWORKERS).

Think about how you feel when you approach a salesperson who ignores you until he or she finishes a personal phone call. Sixty-eight percent of customers move on to other service providers because they've had a negative employee contact, only 14 percent because they were dissatisfied with the product or service. Consider the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." In every situation, model kindness, courtesy and prompt service. Return calls and e-mail promptly and make sure to follow-through on promises. As a public institution, we are here to serve - children, families, our community and each other. And what a great model we show our students when we treat those around us with dignity and respect.

9. HELP PARENTS UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR ROLE IN THE EDUCATION PROCESS AND WHAT THEIR ROLE IS.

According to John Wherry, a parent involvement expert, "By far, the most important parent involvement happens at home - Reading to children, being seen reading, setting an example, showing interest in school work, and much more!" Provide training and support for parents. All parents want the best for their children and want to help them succeed. Provide them with meaningful ways they can help at home and in the classroom. Be aware of their home or work situation and respectful of their time and needs. Above all, help them understand they are the first and most influential teacher of their children.

10. BE BRIEF AND TO THE POINT.

Our society is bombarded with messages. In order to get the public's attention and keep it, you must be brief and to the point. Parents can't digest lengthy newsletters or notes. They need short articles that are broken up on the page by graphics and headlines. (Consider how the successful "USA Today" newspaper looks). One sheet of paper is best. Use a 4th to 6th grade reading level. Remember, 80 percent of people will spend just 30 seconds reading what you send home. Edit your communications to the most important points you want parents to remember. NEVER use educational jargon and acronyms.

11. STICK TO THE FACTS.

Always tell the truth and don't speculate. If you don't know the answer to something, say you don't know and that you'll get back to the person with an answer. Be sure to follow-up. Speculating spreads rumors that may not be accurate.

12. DO A GOOD JOB.

It sounds so simple, but 90% of good public relations is simply doing a good job.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MEDIA EXCLUSIONS

Any parent who does not want his/her child to be interviewed, photographed or videotaped by newspaper, television, radio media, the Pattonville school-community relations department or any district department/program for the purpose of news coverage or other district projects may complete a media exclusion form provided each year with the individual school's "back-to-school" materials. Any child who has one of these completed forms in his file will not be included in any publicity-related materials produced by the child's school or the district (newsletters, press releases, etc.). Forms must be filled out annually to continue the exclusion.

Please familiarize yourself with the children in your class who have a media exclusion form on file (check with your school secretary for a list). We cannot use any photos/interviews/video footage of children in your class with this designation, so we will need to know this before we covering your event.

For more information, call our office at our extension, 1025. Thank you.

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