



Effective Family Communication for Teachers

Strong family-teacher partnerships are vital to student success. When teachers and families communicate effectively, students benefit through improved academic achievement, behavior, and overall well-being. This guide will help you establish meaningful connections with your students' families through thoughtful, consistent communication strategies.

How to Call or Message Home

Establish Communication Preferences

Survey families early in the year to identify their preferred contact methods (call, text, email, app) and optimal times. Keep this information in an easily accessible spreadsheet or digital tool.

Leverage Technology Tools

Consider platforms like ParentSquare, Google Voice for consistent outreach. These tools help maintain professional boundaries while enabling quick, convenient communication.

Address Language Barriers

Utilize translation services, bilingual staff members, or digital translation tools to ensure all families receive information in their preferred language. Document language needs in your contact system.

Always be mindful of family work schedules and availability when reaching out. The right message at the wrong time may go unnoticed or create additional stress for busy families.

Dos: Best Practices for Contacting Families



Start Positive

Begin each interaction with a friendly greeting and share something positive about the student before addressing any concerns.

Communicate Regularly

Establish consistent communication patterns through weekly updates, newsletters, or brief check-ins, not just when problems arise.

Practice Active Listening

Create space for families to share their insights, concerns, and questions. Two-way communication builds trust and mutual respect.

Be Clear and Culturally Responsive

Use straightforward language and show awareness of diverse family backgrounds, values, and communication styles.

Don'ts: Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Negative-Only Communication

Reaching out exclusively for behavioral issues or academic concerns creates tension and damages the school-home relationship. Parents may begin to dread hearing from you.

Educational Jargon

Using specialized terminology, acronyms, or complex language creates barriers to understanding. Avoid phrases like "formative assessment" or "differentiated instruction" without explanation.

Disregarding Preferences

Ignoring family communication preferences shows a lack of respect for their circumstances. Some families cannot answer calls during work hours or may have limited data for emails.

Privacy Violations

Never discuss sensitive student information in public forums, group emails, or unsecured channels. Maintain confidentiality in all communications about academic or behavioral matters.

❌ **Important reminder:** Always document your communication attempts, especially for sensitive situations or ongoing concerns. This creates a valuable record of your professional efforts.

Additional Guidance & Tips

01

Assess Language Needs

Proactively identify families who need interpretation or translated materials. Don't wait for them to request assistance.

02

Close the Loop

Follow up after initial contacts to demonstrate ongoing commitment and provide updates on any issues previously discussed.

03

Maximize Face-to-Face Opportunities

Use conferences and school events to strengthen relationships and have deeper conversations about student progress.

04

Adjust As Needed

Regularly check if your communication approaches are working for families and be willing to adapt based on their feedback.



Building strong family partnerships requires flexibility and cultural humility. Remember that families are the experts on their children and have valuable insights to share.

Resources & Key Takeaways

Available Resources

- District interpreters and translation services
- Digital tools: Google Translate, TalkingPoints, ClassDojo
- Sample scripts and templates from your administration
- Family engagement coordinators and bilingual staff

"When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more."

– A. Henderson & K. Mapp, research synthesis

Key Takeaways



Remember that effective family communication is built on:

- **Trust** - earned through consistency and respect
- **Positivity** - celebrating successes, not just addressing problems
- **Responsiveness** - adapting to family needs and preferences
- **Partnership** - recognizing families as equal collaborators in education