



## Communicating with School

### What is Communication?

Communication is the process of exchanging information in order to create a shared understanding. It is used in all areas of our lives, including with children's teachers and other people at the school. Research shows that positive and on-going home/school communication leads to positive outcomes for students. It is the responsibility of the school and of families to keep communication going.

### Why is Communication Between Home and School Important?

- Home-school communication is among the most important factors in developing strong relationships between teachers and families. (Epstein, 1996; Christensen & Sheridan, 2001)
- Parents and teachers consider communication the number one factor to increase trust. (Adams & Christenson, 2000)
- Positive results of parental involvement include improved student achievement, reduced absenteeism, improved behavior, and restored confidence among parents in their children's school. (National Education Association, 2007)

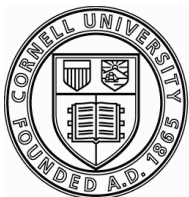
### Communication Tools and Opportunities

At the beginning of the school year, introduce yourself and let the teacher know you are supportive and want to be involved.

Communicate via the phone, e-mail, newsletters, notes, your child's planner, letters, websites, web-portal information systems, and in person. It is a good idea to ask teachers at the beginning of the school year what is the best way to reach them and to let them know what is the best way to reach you.

There are many formal opportunities for communication, such as parent/teacher conferences, attending workshops for parents, chaperoning, volunteering, and being on committees. However, you can also take advantage of informal opportunities, such as when you are attending a concert or sporting event at the school. Additionally, some teachers may be available for home visits.

Parents are responsible for asking questions, learning school routines and time tables, providing important information, respecting the perspectives of others, and advocating effectively and appropriately for their children.



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**# 1 Rule of Communication**  
Don't wait until there is a problem to start communication. By communicating early, you can stop problems from happening.

## What if there is a problem?

- Don't jump to conclusions before getting all of the information. Children don't always report events accurately, despite their best intentions.
- Be assertive, not aggressive.
- Avoid blaming the teacher for problems your child may be having. Instead, ask how you can work together to solve the problem.
- Try to resolve the problem with the teacher first before going to the principal or superintendent.
- Bring your child to meetings with the teacher if it is appropriate.
- Document the communication in writing for future follow-up.

## Communication Tips

- Identify the goal and reason for the communication.
- Begin your communication with a positive attitude and a willingness to be a partner with your child's teacher. It is best to assume that the school and teacher care about your child.
- Give positive feedback to your child's teacher when things are going well.
- Keep teachers informed of changes at home or with your child.

## Parent/Teacher Conferences

### "Be Heard"

- Best intentions assumed
  - Emphasis on learning
  - Home-school collaboration
  - Examples and evidence
  - Active listening
  - Respect for all
  - Dedication to follow-up
- *Before the conference:*  
Talk with your child about his or her progress in school. Make a list of questions you want to ask the teacher.
  - *During the conference:*  
Don't be afraid to ask questions and talk about your concerns.
  - *After the conference:*  
Follow up with what you said you would do and contact the teacher if you have additional questions or concerns. Support your child's learning in as many ways as you can.  
(HFRP, 2009)

**Remember, schools and parents are working towards the same goal—helping your child be successful!**

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This publication was produced in whole or in part with funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, Parental Information and Resource Center program, under grant #84.310.A. The content herein does not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Education, any other agency of the U.S. government, or any other source.

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Revised 4/10