

Parent's Guide to School Communication from an Educator



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I have found that often times parents of all backgrounds and educational levels have difficulty in understanding how they should communicate with schools regarding their children. So, I have put together some quick guidelines that I think will improve the school – parent partnership. To be clear, I believe that in the IDEAL circumstances it is the responsibility of the school to take the lead on this. That said, I think this can be beneficial for everyone involved.

Establish Communication Protocols and Expectations

As a parent it is important to understand that your child's teacher likely has between 20 and 150 other students that they are working with every day. That said, it is fair to expect that you receive

communication from the school if and when they notice any change in behavior, mood, or performance. As a parent, I believe that this is a fair expectation to share with your child's educators and also a responsibility to share the same communication under the same parameters with the school as a courtesy if you noticing something at home.

Understand Desired Outcomes

Almost every school measures student academic success in different ways. As a parent you should have a clear understanding of what your child has been learning and will be learning in the future and how success will be measured.

Grades

Grades mean much to parents. Probably way too much. A teacher should be able to explain how they grade to you and the meaning that it carries. Assuming grades are truly a reflection of learning, artifacts should be available to show parents their student's performance compared to the expected standard that you can clearly explain.

Where Does My Kid Fit?

Most parents want to know where their student is in comparison to their peers so national benchmarking data is generally appreciated and answers many questions. If your student struggles in these comparisons, it is not too much to expect a plan as to what the school is going

to do to help your student. This is also a time to not NECESSARILY be satisfied if your student is performing well. If they are performing well compared to others, then the questions should be about ensuring they are still being challenged.

Set Goals

The goal of communicating is to create a shared commitment to a student's success. In order to get to this end, a teacher must have invested time and energy into creating the desired outcomes for that student in the future (hopefully WITH the student) ahead of time. This act demonstrates MUTUAL responsibility for the student's growth and gives the parent something to actively monitor.

Character Counts

Everyone wants to know who their student is when they are not around. If your student receives discipline in class or in school already may have an idea. For the 85% of students that do exactly what they should on a daily basis, it is more than appropriate to want this information from someone who may spend more time with your child on many days that you do.

Aim for a Partnership

It should never be lost that the point of communication with a teacher is for it to be meaningful and to help create better support for the student. Part of this engagement is for all parties (parent, teacher, and

student) to understand how they can serve as a better *partner* in their child's education. This may seem too formal, but I like to encourage parents and teachers to consider three I WILL statements to establish norms and expectations for the year. This is a commitment from the teacher, student, and parent as to what 'I WILL' do to improve the educational experience of the student throughout the next months of the child's schooling experience.

Navigating the school environment is difficult for nearly every parent. My hope is that these tips on what you can and should expect in terms of communication and a partnership with your child's educators will help provide some help while on this journey.