



## Ideas for Effective Communication between Home and School *Ideas for Parents and Professionals*

Parents, teachers, and support staff all have the same goal, a child's learning, but sometimes communication breakdowns cause inefficiency and disagreement in accomplishing this goal. This article includes ideas for establishing communication systems to make this the best and most effective year yet.

**1. Communicate Early** – Communicate early either in written form or through a conversation at the beginning of the school year. Early communication sets the stage for year long collaboration by establishing a system and setting expectations.

**Professionals** – Let parents know classroom expectations, schedules, important dates, and contact information for other professionals working with their child. A classroom information sheet with a handwritten note is a friendly way to start the year.

**Parents** – Be sure you provide current records and updated information (e.g. phone number and email address) to teachers and therapists. Include any other important information in a letter or email so the professional can refer to it during the year.

**2. Have a Consistent System** – Establish a communication system that works for both professionals and families. Some people communicate well over email while others like to have printed information in a folder or notebook. Discuss which method works best and stick with it. Providing information back and forth is important for consistency across environments. Use communication systems to discuss how strategies are working and what changes might be helpful.

**Professionals** – For regular communication use a format that is accessible to all families. For example, have a newsletter or regularly updated website. Include an area in the newsletter for handwritten child-specific comments. Another idea for smaller classrooms is to have daily notes or a journal to send back and forth between school and home. Communication encourages a running dialogue and often results in new information that can translate into effective classroom results.

**Parents** – Keep professionals up to date about home progress as well as any physical (e.g. child isn't sleeping well) or emotional (e.g. a pet passed away) changes at home. Often times a child's personal experiences affect their behavior and academics. Use the teacher's preferred communication method (email, note, phone) so they receive the information in a timely fashion.

**3. Be Positive** – Notes, phone calls, and emails frequently are used for negative rather than positive communication. This can create a situation where parents and professionals prefer not to hear from each other. Keep positive news part of updates. Be sure to highlight progress in difficult areas and note when the child is making progress on a skill. Compliment the other person's hard work and note when a child is accomplishing goals due to work in other environments.

**4. Understand Limitations** – People balance professional and personal lives and it is important to respect their time. Busy professionals want updates and information on children, but parents should recognize professionals work with many children. Parents want to work on skills with their child, but they may be busy, need additional resources, or not clearly understand why something is being done. Communicate, have patience, and remember everyone has the same goal.

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