

Guidelines for Parent-Teacher Communications in District 27

We value the strong home-school partnership that we have in the District. Next to high quality instruction in the classroom, our partnership stands as one of the most significant factors in a child's education. We want to ensure that we have an open and highly collaborative relationship with all our parents and that our communication is strong. In addition, we want to address any concerns you may have over the course of the year in a positive, constructive, and reasoned manner.

Our Commitment to our Parents When Concerns Arise

- We will promptly address any issues that arise and work closely with you to find a solution.
- If we have a concern, we will share it with you and suggest ideas to resolve it. We will seek your support and be open to your ideas for resolution.
- If you have a concern with the teacher or principal, we will:
 - Clarify all those individuals who need to know about the situation
 - Explore what resources might be needed to address the situation, and
 - Determine the time frame that we will update you on the situation or concern
- We will develop a firm solution in a reasonable time and ensure the principal can support the solution and provide the resources to achieve it. We will develop a clear communication plan for updating you over time should ongoing monitoring be part of the solution.

How Best to Communicate:

Parents have three direct ways to communicate with teachers: e-mail, telephone, and face-to-face meetings. Each of these methods can serve a useful purpose as follows:

Email

Emails permit teachers to respond to questions that are simple and straight forward. They are efficient to transmit information.

Email, though, has its limitations. It is not a productive method to problem-solve with parents and leaves room for misunderstanding. Moreover, it is devoid of any affective tone to reflect the true feelings of a person.

With this context in mind, teachers will welcome the opportunity to share information or give a short response. Conversations that require more extensive interaction should include a telephone conversation or a face-to-face meeting.

Telephone or Face-to-Face Meetings

These two methods permit the teacher to more effectively problem-solve a concern with parents. While either of these two methods is appropriate, face-to-face meetings are useful if more than one person may need to be involved in the conversation. We encourage our staff to use these two methods to problem-solve concerns and topics with parents.

The Realities of the Teachers' Lives

- The teachers' top priority during the school hours is working directly with the children. As such, the classroom environment does not allow teachers to check their e-mails regularly. In most cases, teachers check and respond to emails before and after school.
- Teachers are sometimes unavailable because of meetings, peer collaboration, conferences or training sessions, which will delay their response.
- Teachers devote a considerable time before and after school developing lesson plans, preparing the room for daily activities, grading work, and reviewing the curriculum, standards and assessments that must be taught.
- Please remember the classroom environment and the complexity of a teacher's day. If you don't receive an immediate answer to your email, it doesn't mean you are being ignored. A teacher will generally respond within 24 hours.
- Please consider your goal in communicating with the teacher. If your purpose is to share information, or give the teacher time to think about an issue, an e-mail is appropriate. However, if you would like two-way dialogue on an issue, please consider a telephone call or request a face-to-face meeting.
- Each primary teacher has at least 18-22 students in her classroom. At Shabonee and Wood Oaks, teachers may teach 40-120 students. Please consider how many emails teachers could potentially receive throughout the day from parents!

CONCERN MANAGEMENT PROCESS - FOUR STEPS

Step 1	Contact the teacher via email, phone or message at the office. The teacher will respond within one business day.
Step 2	If you send an email to the teacher, please state the general concern. If the concern can be resolved through email, the teacher will address it through email. However, if the concern is more involved, please state it <u>without detailing all the specifics</u> . We have found that that best way to resolve concerns is to discuss them and not try to resolve them through email. Email is not an adequate collaboration tool to address concerns, but it does serve to express the need to work on the issue.
Step 3	The teacher will connect with you to understand and resolve the concern. This could be an email or phone call. The teacher may also suggest a time for a face-to-face meeting.
Step 4	If you and the teacher cannot resolve the concern, please ask that the principal participate in the problem-solving process. The principal will be the final arbiter on all matters relating student concerns. In a rare case, the matter may be referred to the Superintendent or Central Office Administrator.

We thank you, in advance, for following this process. We can best meet your needs by working together, face-to-face, or on the phone as appropriate. We want to ensure that our decisions for your children are thoughtful, measured, and within our capacity to reasonably deliver. Our experience tells us that students benefit most when we work together to meet their needs in a culture of respect and collaboration.
