



AISA's Communication Policy

Rationale for this Document - Constructive school communication is essential for a healthy school culture. It nurtures empathic and positive assumptions about all stakeholders. This document aims to clarify what positive and constructive communication looks like at AISA, and how it helps to build a healthy school culture.

"Parents and teachers share responsibility for creating a working relationship that fosters children's learning. The foundation for good parent-teacher relationships is frequent and open communication. Both teachers and parents share this responsibility for creating a foundation." Preventing and Resolving Parent-Teacher Differences, Eric Digest.

Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) & Classroom Parents - Our PTSA serves the school to support its mission and guiding statements, and works with the school to build spirit across our community. Class Parents are nominated at the start of the school year and serve as representatives to each class. Their role is to:

- ✓ Serve as a communication link between parents and the PTSA and the School to ensure events and activities are communicated to all parents
- ✓ Seek volunteer parents to support various events, and classroom activities and needs
- ✓ To be of help to the teachers (eg: as a chaperone for field trips, to help recruit other parent volunteers etc., to help with decorations)
- ✓ Welcome new parents in the class into the school
- ✓ Share information as needed

Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) - The AISA PAC is a group of up to 13 parents across all divisions of the school, working together with the school leadership team to ensure the implementation of the mission and guiding statements. *The Parent Advisory Committee supports the School's mission by advising on matters of program and policy. It exists to improve the school community's knowledge and understanding of AISA's governing statements through effective home and school communication. It is a decision-shaping mechanism.* PAC members are selected by the school at the start of each year. New parents can inform the director of their interest in joining the PAC.

AISA's Communication Policy

AISA Constructive Communication Principles

We Are All Builders of Trust - Trust is fundamental to a school. Once trust is built, we can master the healthy and respectful conflict that moves the school forward. Trust at its core, means we are always doing the right thing, and acting and communicating in a timely way, with honesty and integrity. The following principles will help to build trust across all constituents in our school.

We Follow the Chain of Command - We tackle the issue where it starts. We talk directly about a problem with the responsible person, before going to the next level. Allow teachers to address your concerns and work toward solving the problem. If you cannot obtain results, only then move up to the next level.

We Prioritize What's Most Important - We determine what's most important and we are prepared to let lesser important issues go.

We Start with What is Going Right - If you have something positive to say, say it. We are all better prepared to hear concerns if we can also be recognized and appreciated for what is going well.

We Engage in Active Listening - Listen for a deeper understanding. Your curiosity in the discussion signals a deep respect for others' ideas and concerns.

We Avoid Negative Criticism in Front of Our Students - Children find parents criticizing their teachers in front of them confusing; teacher criticisms of parents are as equally unhealthy. After all, we are all on the same team and it does nothing to address the problem. In older children, a pattern of negative criticism may foster arrogance, defiance, and rudeness toward teachers. Instead, we can explore solutions and always assume honorable and positive intentions by everyone involved. Even when both parties believe they are correct, this doesn't stop us from coming up with win-win solutions for the child's sake.

We Believe Grace and Composure Matters - We truly believe that constructive communication respects the dignity of all, that includes grace and composure, always precipitates solutions.

We Use Discretion - There are many times parents like to talk to other parents about teachers, and teachers can do the same about parents. This isn't always healthy. We consider if our conversation is going to be constructive in solving the problem – otherwise we don't have it.

AISA's Communication Policy

What are the steps I can take to address concerns?

1. Concerns a parent hears from their own children:

- A. Listen to your child. Before you assume it is a problem, help your child understand the situation better.
- B. For elementary children, talk directly with the teacher.
- C. For secondary children, proceed with patience and an open mind. Help your child see the situation from different perspectives, before acting – sometimes issues resolve with time.
- D. For older children, coach them to take the lead and sort out their differences on their own. Our children need to learn how to work with diverse people; and how to advocate for themselves. When you achieve conflict resolution on your own, you become a more confident person.

2. Concerns a parent hears in the community from other parents:

- A. Encourage others to use discretion when you hear community members talking about a teacher or staff member out in the public. No one likes to be talked about in public forums; use the same courtesy with your child's teachers.
- B. Encourage other parents to listen to and coach their child, or use the steps outlined when parents have their own personal concerns, and meet with the teacher first to discuss concerns directly.
- C. Remember every child is different, and what may be a concern for one parent, is not always a concern for another parent. It is always best to check in directly with the teacher about your own child.

3. Concerns of your own:

- A. Talk directly with the teacher or staff member involved
 - ✓ Sometimes the teacher is unaware of the difficulty, or the child's perception
 - ✓ Sometimes the child misunderstood the teacher
 - ✓ Sometimes the teacher needs to be given an opportunity to reflect and correct
 - ✓ Check facts first and test assumptions
 - ✓ Seek to understand before blaming
 - ✓ Agree with teacher on how to proceed in support of the child
- B. If the subject is delicate, or if it cannot be resolved by a quick email exchange, meet in person rather than discussing it over email. Emails from parents in a hurry can unintentionally alter the message leaving context open to misinterpretation.
- C. If writing, **do not** Cc' the Principal or School Director, or anyone else in the first step, as it unnecessarily escalates the matter and sends a message that "there is no chance we can work this out together." If you have concerns, take them up as you would want someone to take them up with you.

AISA's Communication Policy

D. When you are discussing your concerns, or complaints about what is not working, please accompany those concerns with potential solutions – you know your child best. Wear your problem-solving hat and work with the teacher to suggest ideas that best support your child.

E. If after some time it is still not working, please let the teacher know you have reached an impasse, and you will be looking for some additional support from a school administrator.

When do I draw the line, and seek support from another person, Principal or School Director?

1. Any instance when your child doesn't feel safe (emotionally, socially or physically).
2. Any AISA Human Rights violation (or repeated violation) that has not been sufficiently addressed by a staff member.
3. When you have discussed the concern with the teacher, and you have communicated to the teacher that you have reached an impasse.
4. Anytime you suspect child neglect, abuse, sexual exploitation/molestation concerns about your own child, or another child in our school community. In the event there is a suspicion or concern, please contact a school administrator or school counselor and they can assist you in reporting to the appropriate authorities:

All staff and faculty can be reached by calling +971 2 444-4333 and contacting the receptionist to direct your call.

Danielle Rich Elementary Principal, drich@aisa.sch.ae, Katrina Bloom Elementary Assistant Principal, kbloom@aisa.sch.ae, Mariana Hernandez Naufal Elementary Counselor, MHnaufal@aisa.sch.ae, Omar Ugalde Secondary Principal, OUgalde@aisa.sch.ae, Jodi Gratman Secondary Assistant Principal, jgratman@aisa.sch.ae, Tim Rogers Secondary Assistant Principal, trogers@aisa.sch.ae, Jeri Jones Secondary Counselor, jjones@aisa.sch.ae, Rhonda Williams Secondary Counselor, rwilliams@aisa.sch.ae, or Patrick Rich School Director, prich@aisa.sch.ae