

DRAFT
PARENT - SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

“Effective Communication”: *E-mail Requires Courteous Language*

Student achievement is dependent upon a number of factors including the involvement of parents. Involvement is defined in many ways consisting of a number of activities. For busy parents a simple reminder will help that their involvement in their children’s learning is an outgrowth of the core principles of parent – school partnership— effective communication, help with homework, parent professional partnerships, supporting positive behavior. What follows is the first of two information briefs focused on effective communication.

Now more than ever busy people are depending on the most efficient and simple ways to transmit information. Scheduling meetings, forwarding agendas, assigning tasks, are all some of the ways that e-mailing fulfills communication needs. There is growing concern however that e-mail when used haphazardly or without thought can injure

relationships and create problems. In the professional environment e-mail must be used judiciously, with written language that is clear and concise and containing the intended goals of the e-mail written in the subject line. E-mail is a written record and could be entered as evidence in a legal proceeding. Dashing off an e-mail in a moment of anger can harm a fragile partnership and create embarrassment for the sender.

What follows are some suggestions for using email effectively.

1. Maintain a professional demeanor: When writing an email be cordial and respectful. Be friendly but be sure to write Ms., Mrs., or Mr. unless the reader has offered the use of his or her first name.
2. Use a Business writing style: Keep your email message short and to the point. Concise and clear writing will ensure that the reader understands the point of the communication.
3. Know the rules of confidentiality: Do not assume your recipient is the only one who will read the email. Never write anything that you wouldn’t mind reading on the front page of your local newspaper.
4. Treat the subject line as an information transmittal tool: A meaningful but short title will help give the reader an idea of the intent of the message.
5. Large Attachments need some advance notice: Not everyone has the bandwidth to upload large files. Better to send a link of where the file is or if not a link give a brief summary and ask if the reader would like the full document. For more than one file zip them into a single file.

6. Capitalizing words is like SHOUTING: Refrain from sending an email you wrote when you were angry. Instead save it in a folder and in a day or two, reconstruct a note that will generate a positive outcome rather than bad feelings among the parties involved.

7. Disagreements: In every partnership there is likely to be a disagreement. Before broadcasting your disagreement in an email let the e-mail "rest" in the draft box for several hours or days if possible. Return to the e-mail after a time and review that what you were thinking is actually what you wrote.

8. Courtesy Copying and "reply to all": In the context of a conversation in which a simple yes or no response is required it may not be needed to include everyone in the e-mail. Be sure that your e-mail is directed to the one person who needs to see it. It is not necessary to clog up everyone's inbox at all times.

9. Reply to emails: If possible always reply to emails. Even a simple response that you've received the email and will reply to questions at a later time is better than no response. Senders never know for sure if emails are received due to spam filters.

10. Spell/grammar check: Always check your spelling and grammar before sending email. What you write and how well you write it reflects upon you.

11. Think of e-mail as the front page of the local newspaper. A good rule of thumb when corresponding via e-mail is to never write anything that you wouldn't mind seeing on the front page of your local morning newspaper. Once it enters cyber space the sender has lost all control over where it will end up.

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