

# Beyond the Newsletter:

Working with Families in the Elementary Classroom



{

Alexis Jones, PhD Candidate

INTC Beginning Teacher Boot Camp

June 30, 2016

**When you hear the phrase, "family communication," what comes to mind?**

 When poll is active, respond at **PolleEv.com/alexisjones**  
 Text **ALEXISJONES** to **37607** once to join

What do *you* think?

# When you hear the phrase, "family communication," what comes to mind?

Respond at [PollEv.com/alexisjones](https://www.poll-ev.com/alexisjones)  
Text **ALEXISJONES** to **37607** once to join, then text your message



## Why is family communication important?

Turn and talk to a neighbor:

& Why is this important for the student?

& For the parent?

& For the teacher?

Why is family communication important?

## ⌘ Research says...

- ⌘ Family involvement that is *linked to student learning* has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement
- ⌘ Family involvement that supports student learning at home is *linked to improved student achievement*
- ⌘ Families of *all cultural backgrounds and education and income levels* can have a positive influence on their children's learning
- ⌘ Family involvement efforts that recognize cultural and class differences, address family needs, and build on families' strengths are *effective in engaging diverse families*

*Henderson and Mapp (2002)*

# Why is family communication important?

✧ Megan Olivia Hall

2013 Minnesota Teacher of the Year

“Building Relationships Between Parents and Teachers”

Why is family communication important?

- ⌘ At your seat, use the Post-it notes to write down some of the family-school communication ideas that you've seen or participated in this past year
- ⌘ When you have several ideas written down, place them on the appropriate wall:
  - ⌘ **"Hmmmm...???"** – ideas that are interesting, but you have questions/concerns
  - ⌘ **"Best of the best!"** – ideas that you absolutely love and would like to use somehow

# What have you seen?

[REDACTED] As a parent, I hate the super long stapled documents explaining boring stuff (like test scores - classroom routines and rules are fine), I also don't like "helpful" documents like : how to read to your kid, how to feed your kid nutritious food, etc.

[REDACTED] k I am with [REDACTED] I hate the " extra tips". They feel condacending and belittle my job as a parent.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · June 20 at 10:58am


[REDACTED] I'm not a teacher and I agree about the tips. Do not like them.

[REDACTED] Off the top of my head, I appreciate the updates in all the methods you mentioned. I like to know how they are doing on a day to day basis, areas in which they are doing well, areas that they could use some extra help, how they are interacting with peers.

# Thoughts from parents



[REDACTED] I loved my granddaughter's teacher's Facebook group page. She posted pictures galore and notifications about projects coming up, programs, and field trips. Very informative especially since the papers went home to two separate households and sometimes one parent would see a paper notice and the other wouldn't.

Unlike · Reply ·  1 · June 20 at 12:13pm

[REDACTED] I love newsletters, printed or emailed. I enjoy it all really. A quick email has alerted me to possible issues and also given me some encouraging info about my girls.

[REDACTED] I like the calendars, plans, and overview of what is being done in the classroom. On a more individual level, I wish we got a word based description on how the kid is doing. The tests are one thing but I'd rather hear how my kid is doing with the process.

# Thoughts from parents

### Beginning of Year (before school starts)

- Meet with all parents before school starts to go over behavior and academic expectations in person and give them a hand out about it.
- Email all parents I have emails for to introduce myself. Parents I do not have emails for, I call.
- I would like to do home visits before the start of the year, but I do not ever get my class list early enough.

### During the School Year

- Literacy Connection Journals\*
- Emails
- Classroom management plan / Reset Sheet
- Literacy Backpacks (go home on Fridays)\*
- Family Message Journals\*
- The **photography project** has been a big hit to start conversations with families, too.
- Newsletters (1 page only, goes home on Fridays, only includes what we are working on, important activities coming up, etc etc)
- Classroom website (which has pictures, expectations, standards, a blog, favorite books, etc)
- Classroom Kidblog where parents can blog back about what we are doing
- "Good News Notes" - similar to "STARS" kids get at King, but these are totally random and not "earned" - they are given at the end of the day or at random times when I see a kid being awesome.
- I never wait to talk to parents at p/t conferences. I had 100% show up during my fall conferences this past year (and about 85% in the spring) which is totally crazy for [redacted] parents, but I believe I am getting better at making positive experiences for my at risk families).

# Thoughts from parents

# What matters to me...

A young adult photovoice project



Above: "That's a picture of my cows at four o'clock in the morning. They're awake earlier for the milk and then... They're even still, they're up for the milk... in the morning, around 4:30 they're up and in the stalls... Farming is just in your mind and heart. It's not just in the hands."



"So my family, I love to see my family, I love to see my family..."



"I would be interested in seeing more about..."



"This is a picture of..."



"This is a picture of..."



"This is a picture of..."



Above: "Getting closer everyday is a big part of life for me... There's that saying that says 'work'... The house was a different way to see that with my dad and mom."



"That's the 'Quorum'..."



Right: "A picture of a young man in a red shirt..."



Above: "This is a picture of..."



Above: "This is a picture of..."



Above: "This is a picture of..."



Above: "I would just guess under the trees for the cows because they were the most beautiful, some under the trees, some in the grass and some in the trees..."



Left: "The picture..."



Below: "This is a picture of..."



## phOLKS Lore: Learning from Photographs, Families, and Children

# One example...

⌘ In closing, try to work toward:

⌘ *Creating opportunities for students and families to learn together at home*

⌘ *Establishing respectful two-way communication*

⌘ *Learning together as families and educators.*

⌘ In closing, work toward:

⌘ *Creating opportunities for students and families to learn together at home*

⌘ *Establishing respectful two-way communication*

⌘ *Learning together as families and educators.*

Thank you for coming! 😊

I plan on using this idea in my classroom.

Take home note for individual student

"Today I worked hard at \_\_\_\_\_"

After HW: ~~the~~ child wrote about HW experience, what able to do on her own

presentation night



Monthly Newsletters sent home

Blog/classroom website

Parent-teacher Conferences

Write in a student's assignment notebook everyday to the parent about the child's progress. Parents would sign and write back any questions or comments

Weekly news letter

Emails

Great ideas

Parent-teacher  
conferences

Write in a student's  
assignment notebook  
everyday to the  
parent about the  
child's progress. Parents  
would sign and write  
back any questions or  
comments

Weekly news  
letter

Emails

Open  
door  
policy  
visits  
encouraged

texting  
parents  
often

Talk w/ them  
when in for  
cupcake party  
or event

Calling  
home.

A parent  
came in to  
talk about  
his job (relevant  
to curriculum)

Letters home - the class  
brainstorms what they've  
done that week + they  
write individual letters to  
parents who are encouraged  
to write back

• Class dojo  
on the wall

Paper/digital  
newsletters

class  
twitter  
w/ pictures

# Great ideas

Hmmm....?

I have questions or concerns about these ideas.

on-task charts  
that go home  
w/ student

parents 100%  
in charge  
of holiday  
parties

Having a parent  
come into the  
classroom to  
"present" their  
family culture

weekly  
newsletter  
emails

I need to think more on these....



# ideas.

on-task charts  
that go home  
w/ student

Call after  
school or during  
prep

Email throughout  
the day

having the student  
call home on  
your cell phone

9.

parents 100%  
in charge  
of holiday  
parties

Weekly Note  
in take home  
folder for  
individual child  
for parents to  
sign

Writing a  
letter to parents  
about what you  
want to communicate

Having a parent  
come into the  
classroom to  
"present" their  
family culture

Parents  
volunteer  
to run  
field day

online  
(email) only  
scheduling  
and  
communication

weekly  
newsletter  
emails

Parent  
night

Allowing  
parent  
volunteers

Text throughout  
the day

I need to think more on these...