

Home – School Communication: How to Make it Work

The Peirce staff believes strongly that teachers, parents and students must work together as a team. It is important that parents communicate with staff any issues or concerns that have about their children for this team to work well. If a parent has a worry or concern that persists, it is almost always worth discussing. In order to help parents who are unsure how to go about addressing a particular concern, we offer the following guidelines.



TALK TO THE CLASSROOM TEACHER: Classroom teachers are almost always an appropriate place to start, especially if the concern involves the curriculum, instruction, or something that is happening in the classroom. In addition, teachers appreciate knowing about home situations that might affect a child, such as a family illness or other family crisis. Since teachers need to be attentive to preparing for class and to students in the morning, talking to teachers during this time is generally not preferred. If possible, leave a note or email a teacher, and the classroom teacher will contact you when it is convenient. Teachers are glad to set up a convenient meeting time to discuss important concerns. All staff members can be reached through **EMAIL** (firstname_lastname@newton.k12.ma.us).

TALK TO OTHER STAFF MEMBERS: If you have a concern that involves your child's participation in art, physical education, library or music, contacting that specialist may be the place to start. Learning center teachers and other special service staff members are available to discuss concerns as well. Again, sending an email or writing a note are appropriate means to reach staff members. Feel free to leave a note for a staff member at the office and it will be placed in their box.



If you have a concern that involves a personal, family or medical issue, and are hesitant to begin with the classroom teacher, consider **contacting the school psychologist, social worker or nurse**. Kristen Lavalley, the school psychologist, and Diane Cohen, the social worker, can be reached at 559-9640 and will return a call within a day or so. Becky Brooker, the nurse, can be reached through the main office number (559-9630).

THE PRINCIPAL is always available to discuss issues or concerns, and is the right person to ask if you are unsure where to go. It is part of the principal's job to help guide parents through the process of communication and resolving issues.

Making the Most of the Parent-Teacher Conference

Parent-Teacher conferences are an important means for communication during the school year. You can assume that the teacher has your child's best interests as the first priority, and he or she will try to communicate as effectively as possible. To make the most of the conference, keep these points in mind:

Before the Conference:

- Make a list of questions you have.
- Decide what information to share that would help your teacher best support your child educationally, socially, and emotionally.
- Be prompt to make the most of your time.

During the Conference:

- Begin on a positive note!
- Listen.
- Ask questions and share concerns.
- If your teacher tells you bad news, don't get angry or apologetic. Ask questions and find out what you can do to help. If you have further questions, set up a separate meeting to discuss the issue in more detail.
- End on a positive note!

After the Conference:

- If appropriate for your child, discuss the conference. Emphasize the good things and discuss issues and steps that you, the teacher and the child will take to make things better.
- Take any actions or steps discussed.
- Keep in touch with the teacher!

Remember that in addition to regularly scheduled conferences, you can ask the teacher for a meeting. A sit-down, face-to-face meeting at a mutually convenient time is often the most successful way to discuss the critical issues around raising and educating children. Together we can make it happen!

