

Family Communication Guide

Directions: Use this guide as a tool to help you write communications for families that are positive and constructive.

The Power of Positivity:

Beginning the year on a positive note sets the tone for the entire school year. If you take the time within the first week or two of school to reach out to each family with a positive comment about their child's behavior, that is not related to academics, you will begin to establish a strong partnership between school and home. Below are some examples of positive behavioral comments you can use in these emails or phone calls.

I am so happy that XYZ is in my class this year.

He/she always walks in with such a positive attitude / a smile on his/her face.

I can't wait to get know him/her better this year.

I'm really looking forward to seeing what he/she can do this year.

I'm really looking forward to partnering with you this year to make it his/her best school year ever.

I just had to share this funny moment that happened in class today....

I just had to tell you about today when I saw XYZ.... (describe an act of kindness).

Even after just a few days, I can already see that XYZ is so....(positive character trait).

XYZ is already showing some great leadership qualities this year.

I really admire XYZ's confidence (or other positive character trait).

Positive Academic Comments:

Once you have gotten to know your students and their academic strengths and weaknesses, you will want to express positive academic comments to families to let them know what their child is doing well. Always be as objective and specific as possible when defining positive academic attributes so families have a very clear understanding of what you are specifically observing in their child. Below are some examples of positive academic comments you can use for progress reports, report cards, or just general communications.

____(student name) is doing well in all academic areas because he/ she _____(describe what you are observing).

_____(describe a particular subject or content area) seems to be a particular strength, and he/she is even able to assist others who are struggling.

____(student name) is always an active listener and frequently contributes to classroom discussions.

____(student name) has grown in confidence in _____(name any areas of growth).

____(student name) asks questions and reaches out for help when needed.

____(student name) helps others in the content, which tells me he/she understands the concepts in this subject well.

____(student name) focuses on his/ her work and completes all assignments/ follows all directions in class well.

Content Specific Examples:

____(student name) has strong number sense and is able to grasp complex mathematical concepts efficiently and use that knowledge to solve complex problems.

____(student name) is fluent in all addition / subtraction / multiplication / division facts and is able to compute them quickly in his/her head.

____(student name) has an inquisitive, scientific mind and enjoys exploring hands-on science concepts.

____(student name) has a keen eye for details and creates elaborate diagrams and lab reports for our scientific investigations.

____(student name) is a creative writer with great voice and strong word choice.

____(student name) has a strong grasp of writing conventions such as grammar, punctuation and spelling.

____(student name) is a strong reader with great oral fluency / comprehension skills.

____(student name) is able to confidently discuss what he/she has read and demonstrates great insight into the author's message.

Constructive Academic Comments:

At times, you will have academic concerns about a student and need to offer constructive, purposeful communication to families. These types of comments should also give families specific ideas of how they can help. Below are some examples of constructive academic comments you can use for progress reports, report cards, or just general communications.

Content Specific Examples:

_____(student name) is struggling with basic addition / subtraction / multiplication / division fact recall which slows down his/her problem-solving abilities. He/she would benefit greatly from 10-15 minutes a day of fact practice with flashcards or using an online practice tool.

_____(student name) seems reluctant to write in class and struggles with deciding on a topic. One way you can help with this at home is to help him/her brainstorm some special memories the he/she could write about.

_____(student name) is not able to read at grade level and would benefit from some extra practice at home. Spending just 15 minutes a day reading outside of school will greatly improve his/her reading skills!

_____(student name) is reading on grade level and is easily able to decode words but seems to struggle with reading comprehension. One great way you can support this at home is by asking him/her to tell you about what he is reading, and asking general follow-up questions like: What was your favorite part? Who is the main character? How did the story end?

_____(student name) does not appear to be studying before each science test. One way you can support him/her at home is by offering to review the flashcards with key ideas on the night before each unit exam.

Constructive Behavioral Comments:

At times, you will also have behavioral concerns about a student and will need support from families at home to help resolve these issues. Below are some examples of constructive behavioral comments you can use for progress reports, report cards, or just general communications.

_____(student name) struggles with working independently and often asks for help before trying something new first. Please encourage him/her to attempt each math problem before offering help with homework.

_____(student name) is having a hard time keeping track of assignment due dates and test schedules. We are recording important dates in his/her daily agenda, so please review it with him/her each evening to remind him/her of what needs to be completed.

_____(student name) appears to have trouble managing his/her emotions and has frequent outbursts in class. Please let me know if you see these same types of behaviors at home, and what you have found works best to help him/her manage those emotions.

_____(student name) often rushes through his/her work and turns in messy or incomplete work that is not done to the best of his/her ability. At home, please encourage him/her to take his time on homework and offer specific praise when you see him/her doing his personal best.

_____(student name) is having trouble maintaining friendships. One way you can encourage stronger relationships at home is to ask him/her about who he/she played with at recess or sat with at lunch.