

Suggestions for Parent to Teacher Email Courtesy

Occasionally you may need to communicate information, a concern or a question to your child's teacher. Your busy schedule, and often the teacher's, may prevent face-to-face discussion. Technology has provided us the wonder of email ... and many teachers are regular users of that tool. Before you send your first message, consider the following courtesy suggestions.

Some lessons that our own parents and teachers provided to us are still meaningful in the electronic world. Three to consider before you start writing an email:

- "In materials you write always communicate answers to the six basic questions: who, what, when, where, why and how."
- "First impressions are lasting ... you are what you write."
- "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Please remember that personal, Urgent or Confidential matters (including your child's grades) should always be communicated in person, or by phone directly with the teacher.

1. COMMON COURTESY:

- Make sure you politely begin the email by addressing the person with their proper title, or the name you have been asked to call them.

Dear Dr. Abacus,
Dear Mrs. Smith,

- Make sure you include your child's full name, so the teacher is certain that he/she knows the student about whom you are writing. If you are not the parent, or your last name is not the same as your child's, make sure you include your relationship to the child.
- Include a descriptive topic statement in the SUBJECT area of your email.
- Use complete sentences, proper grammar, and spell check your message before you send it. Remember, you are making an impression.
- Make sure to include your name and a phone number where the teacher may contact you.
- Allow two school days to get a response to your email. Often the school schedule is too busy for teachers to reply sooner than that.
- If a teacher requests a response from you, please show the same timeliness in your reply.

2. RESIST:

- Do not include your child's teacher(s) in your "best friends" e-list where you forward every funny cartoon or inspiring anecdote. Teachers have limited time to read and react to their emails, phone messages and notes in addition to preparing lessons plans, developing test materials and grading assignments.
- Do not shout, scream or yell. The use of ALL CAPS in an email is considered the equivalent. If you really need to emphasize a word or short phrase ... try using italics or a different font style instead of capital letters (just remember that not all devices will reflect the change in font or style.)
- Offensive language and threats are absolutely NOT allowed. Be civil. Be respectful.
- Do not send photos, graphics or large attachment files. Many email systems will not allow these types of attachments through their firewall so your intended recipient may never get the information. Use "snail mail" or "kid delivery" to get these types of documents to the teacher.
- Try to assure that your emphasis on a topic is not perceived as harassing. If you need to send more than two emails on the same topic, you should probably call the teacher for a conversation.