

Make your weekly newsletter essential

Consolidating all communication so everyone uses it consistently

“To get parents to read your newsletter you need to make it reliable and comprehensive.”

Carol Tilstra Nash
*(speaking as a communication professional
as well as a school parent)*

Your parents are just as busy as you are. If you want them to take the time to read your weekly newsletter you have to publish all information there.

What goes in?

Everything.

Anything you or your staff want or need your parents to know must go in your newsletter, including:

- Announcements for upcoming events (repeated over several weeks)
- Policy changes (also repeated)
- Weekly homework by classroom
- Spelling words
- Outside reading assignments
- Sign-ups for parent-teacher conferences
- Requests for field trip drivers
- Permission slips for field trips
- Hot lunch menus
- Kudos to kids for great behavior you want to encourage
- Uniform requirements for the upcoming choir concert
- Calendar reminders
- And, and, and...

Who, what, when, where, why, how, how much, how long, what do parents need to do

These words need to be posted above the computers of everyone who adds information to your newsletter. In fact, check ncceducation.com/marketingcorner for a pdf you can print and post for them.

Then expunge from the vocabulary of your school, "Well, of course it's _____. We've always done it that way." That is the fastest way to make new, semi-new or even semi-old parents feel like outsiders.

For academies only: I have heard from teachers at a variety of academies that they do not need to communicate with parents since high schoolers now need to be responsible for themselves. If you teach at Rio Lindo you can keep that attitude (a little bit, maybe). But the rest of you still have parents who need to drive their kids or make a car available for them to drive themselves, coordinate events with the rest of their family's schedule, be aware of where their child is, etc. Having that attitude will only buy you ill-will with parents.

Isn't updating information on the website good enough?

NO. Think about this from your parents' perspective. How does a parent know there has been a change on your website? And how will they find that change? Do they need to read through your site every month to check? Every week? Every day? And are you expecting they will read your entire calendar to discover which item has a changed time, date or location?

What about teachers who are used to sending their own messages just for their class?

I strongly suggest you require them to integrate their information into the school newsletter for the following reasons.

- You need to ensure that all information goes home, in both hard copy and as an email, **on the same day every week**. Why? Because parents need to know **when** to expect your messages so they can either ask their children for the hard copy and/or check their email for it.
- By sending all information through one channel you will reinforce for parents that they need to read that one channel.
- By using one channel you are simplifying parents lives--they can count on getting all school information on one day from one place. It's good for parent satisfaction.
- You are giving parents from other grade levels a "sneak peek" into the great education that occurs in each classroom, while generating enthusiasm in kids for activities in higher grade levels. (For example, don't you think that younger kids at many of our schools look forward to spending a week tide-pooling at Albion for outdoor education?)
- By combining teachers' messages on pages printed front and back you will save paper, which is good for the earth.

One caveat: When you are sending home forms to be signed and returned (field trip permissions, driver volunteering, etc.), attach a page just for the classroom that is affected.

Delegation: Collating teachers' announcements into the weekly newsletter, proofreading, printing and copying, and creating and emailing a pdf version can all be done by a volunteer.

Binder tab: Ongoing (put in front of the January tab in your binder)

School size: All