

Commit to primo student progress communication

Committing to communication that is designed around parent convenience

“Parents want frequent, ongoing feedback about how their children are performing...”

American Federation of Teachers
(as published on readingrockets.org)

Review: There are three aspects to primo parent communication:

1. Keeping parents up-to-date with classroom and school-wide information and expectations (which we talked about for the last two weeks)
2. Keeping parents up-to-date with their child's progress (our topic today and next week)
3. Listening to parents

Assumption #1: Teachers want parents to be partners in their child's learning.

We know from research this is important for maximizing each child's potential, so I am assuming our teachers want parent involvement.

Assumption #2: Parents (okay, most parents) want to be partners in their child's learning.

Particularly for parents who commit to sending their child to a Christian school, we can assume they are willing to invest in their child's education. Teachers may view the involvement as low, but rest assured, parents believe they are as involved as they know how to be.

Assumption #3: In order to be partners, parents need to know what is expected and how their child is or is not meeting those expectations.

It is not realistic to expect parents will help ensure a child gets his/her schoolwork done if the parent doesn't know what it is, when it's due, what has been completed and turned, and what is graded and recorded. In addition, to feel a part of the team parents want to know what their child's grades look like early enough to make mid-course corrections.

Assumption #4: Parents will not be wowed by your customer service if each year (or in high schools, for each teacher) they have to learn and conform to how that teacher communicates student progress.

Remember, since parents are our customers we need to design our services to be convenient for them--not us (although our systems need to be efficient for us as well).

As before, here are some examples of how difficult it is for parents if each teacher has their own way of communicating student progress.

- Teacher A works hard to send weekly packets home with her elementary students. The packets include homework for the week and graded homework from the prior week. Parents really appreciate seeing how their child is doing, the big bright stars on the graded homework and the encouraging comments from the teacher. But they can still be unpleasantly surprised when grades come out. How? Because if a homework sheet isn't turned in, it doesn't get graded and returned and the series of zeros can create a grade lower than the parents expect.
- Teacher B has an inbox slot system and puts graded schoolwork in each student's box. But this system isn't explained to parents (who still have a fond attachment to the packet system from last year's classroom) who are frustrated they have no idea how their child is doing until grades come out--and she failed two of her classes.
- Teacher C uses Renweb to record student grades and encourages parents during the "back to school" event (three cheers for this) to check on their child's progress there. He even does a mini-tutorial on how to look up grades in Renweb (four cheers for this). But he grades papers in large batches sporadically, so parents are frustrated because they can't rely on Renweb data being a current picture of their child's progress.
- Teacher D sends sheets home daily showing the homework to be done for that night and requires students to have their parents sign the page to return the next day. Parents appreciate this system but still don't know how their child's grades are until the end of the quarter.
- Parent E checks Renweb regularly with his high school son as a mutual accountability pact. But any missing grades are explained as "the teacher must not have graded that yet." So, in the absence of any specific commitment from the school, the father has to accept this explanation, unless he chooses to call each teacher individually to confirm the status of each assignment.
- Teachers G, H, I, J and K are all committed to keeping Renweb data up to date. But each teacher has a different schedule for doing so, which parents don't know. Parents are frustrated because they don't know when a 0 in an assignment field means their child didn't turn it in or it just hasn't been graded yet.
- Parent L asks her daughter daily and specifically about homework for each class. While her daughter remembers most daily assignments, it seems like longer-term assignments such as science projects or book reports get forgotten and Mom doesn't hear about them until a week or so before they are due. She finds it frustrating there isn't a tool she can use to help her daughter look up and remember these assignments. This frustration is compounded when she notices

there are tabs in the "student information" section of Renweb for "homework" and "lesson plans" and she wonders if one of these might work for listing assignments throughout the semester.

Once again, my hope is that this helps you see what life is like from the perspective of parents who are sincerely interested in their child's education and want to be appropriately supportive.

Next week: A recommended solution

Delegating:

You don't need to delegate anything yet, but you do need to share this with your teachers and staff.

Credits:

Thank you Dan Krause for allowing me to share the results of your meta-analysis.

Binder tab: September

School size: All

Marketing process step:

- 1) Who are we?
- 2) What do families want?
- 3) What needs to change?
- 4) How do we tell our community?
- 5) How do we track results?