

Train your parents to read your newsletter

Creating routine and reliability

“I love, love, love my school's newsletter. I love having everything I need to know that week in one place. I love getting a paper copy every Monday and an email. I use both of them all week.”

Lynda Balkan, parent

If your school has not had an effective newsletter in the past it will take a little training with parents and teachers to ingrain that habit. Here's how.

**Distribute your newsletter
once a week,
on the same day,
with all news here and only here**

(Are you getting the idea I think this is important--important enough to outweigh the resistance of your teachers who are used to doing their own thing?)

Remember the bad old days before Frank the Hedgehog came to live in your inbox? Did you appreciate being bombarded at the whim of whoever was sending the message du jour? Why would your parents be any different?

Additionally, if you are giving parents information on an ad hoc basis you can't realistically hold them accountable for missing something. How did they know to look for it?

Send home a paper copy and a digital one

Best practice: Send a hard copy home, email a link or pdf, and add a pdf to a newsletter archive on your website.

I don't recommend using FaceBook as the digital version. Social media (e.g. FaceBook) should focus on photos, fun and good news—not reminders and logistics. The exception: event announcements and invitations. For example, I would post an invitation to the spring music concert but not all the reminders about what uniform the kids need to wear, how early they need to arrive, where they will be meeting to practice, etc.

Start training at your back to school event--then keep it up during the year.

Make a promise to parents at your back to school event that you will send them information once each week, on the same day and in the same manner for all the school year. And then ask parents to make a promise to read through the information that pertains to their students' grade levels.

You can kindly reinforce this through the year in the way you respond to parents when they ask you or your staff a question, Make it a habit to answer in your very sweetest voice, "I believe that was in the newsletter this week, let me look that up for you" (and of course you will do just that right away).

If the information was not in the newsletter--the sky is falling. Make a note to yourself, the teacher involved, and whoever finalizes your newsletter to get that info in next time. Along with a sincere thank you to the parent who asked the question that prompted your amendment.

Delegating:

Publishing the newsletter (including proofreading), copying, sending it home and sending it via email, can all be done by volunteers. In fact, it is a benefit. They often are in a better position to anticipate questions parents will have, and are less likely to fall into the trap of not thinking about details to include because "we always do ____." Lastly, a second person proofreading is always more effective than the writer.

Credits:

Cynthia Cox, who publishes *Newsnotes*, which was praised above.

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

School size: All