

6 TIPS for Teacher- Student-Parent E-Mail

As more and more homes and classrooms become wired for Internet capability, using e-mail as a

vehicle for supplemental communication between teachers and students and between teachers and parents is becoming a natural development. With e-mail, notes home don't get lost and schools save money by not buying paper, envelopes, and stamps.

Beware though: The "instant communication" that e-mail fosters can be a boon or a boondoggle. Here are six tips for making e-mail an effective communication tool for educators, students, and parents:

1 Collect e-mail addresses of students *and* parents. Not everyone has an e-mail address, but many parents and students do — and they aren't always the same. Capture those at the beginning of the school year so that you can maintain quick, easy contact. But don't forget those students and parents who don't have e-mail access. Always make sure to have an alternative communication mode, too.

2 Tell parents about the curriculum. Sure, you passed out a syllabus at open house, but a month later most parents won't remember it. A brief e-mailed description of what their child's class is studying or a new unit that's just beginning helps keep parents involved and in the know.

3 Remind students about assignments. Long-term assignments in particular are easy for students to lose track of. A few well-timed e-mails between the start of the project and the due date can help students stay on task, especially those students who are prone to procrastinate.

4 Motivate students to do independent study. For example, if you're teaching art or a foreign language, e-mail students the URL of the Louvre Museum in Paris (www.louvre.fr) and suggest they take a virtual tour. Students can tour this famous art museum on the Internet in English or French.

5 Follow a regular e-mail schedule if possible. It helps students and parents get used to reading your messages. But don't overwhelm your readers with too much information or too many e-mails. Consider a weekly Wednesday e-mail to students as a kind of mid-week reminder. A Monday "this week ahead" or Friday "weekly wrap up" e-mail can work well for parents.

6 Model good e-mail etiquette. Keep your e-mail messages short, professional, and on topic. Use a group "to" name, rather than display everyone's e-mail address for the whole recipient group to see. Encourage students and parents with questions and issues to phone or visit you for a personal discussion, rather than exchanging e-mails on sensitive subjects. And don't neglect the niceties of proper spelling, good grammar, and the like.

— Donovan R. Walling

New PDK Book

The Internet and the First Amendment: Schools and Sexually Explicit Expression, Fred H. Cate. First Amendment scholar examines the legal issues that face educators and parents regarding students' access to Internet content. \$10.95 (\$8.95, members)

PDK books and selected works from other publishers are available in the online bookstore — www.pdkintl.org — or by phoning the Order Department at 1-800-766-1156.



PHI DELTA KAPPA *International*

P.O. Box 789

Bloomington, IN 47402-0789 USA

800/766-1156

www.pdkintl.org

Share the knowledge.

Copies of "Teacher-Student-Parent E-Mail" may be made and disseminated (free of charge) without further permission. © Phi Delta Kappa International