

Family Communication Routines: Phone Calls and Texts

Overview

Family communication is an essential part of building strong relationships with families that will ultimately drive the awesomely powerful communities each of our schools strive toward creating. An essential component of family communication is the relationship building between families and teachers that often happens through phone calls and text messages and then is strengthened through Dream Teams and other community events. This document serves as guidance for this component- Phone Calls and Text messages.

Family Communication CFS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Messages are frequently aligned to the Family Big 5 to offer focus & consistency <input type="checkbox"/> Communication routines are clearly named to families up front and followed through on by all staff <input type="checkbox"/> Tone is always respectful and treats families as valued partners and experts on their own child <input type="checkbox"/> Vary communication methods to meet the various communication needs and preferences of families <input type="checkbox"/> The balance of communication is heavily weighted toward the positive (e.g. praise calls, shout-outs) <input type="checkbox"/> Communication opportunities are two-directional, allowing meaningful chances for families to respond and engage v. only receive information

Phone Calls and Text Message Expectations

Below are the expectations for often teachers should be communicating with families based on their roles as goal coaches and academic teachers. Each school must have a family communication tracker where these communications should be logged.

<p>All Teachers: At least 10 quick texts, calls or messages a week (average of 2/day)</p>	<p><i>Call or Text at least one family from their course and goal team every day and log into the Communication tracking system. When considering which families to text prioritize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Focus Four to collaborate with families in support of specific goals <input type="checkbox"/> Praise for specific areas of growth, goals met, exemplary Compass Habits, etc. (Aim for overall 3:1 positive to negative communication) <input type="checkbox"/> Correction calls to problem solve specific concerns
<p>Goal Coaches: 1 Check in Call to each family a month (average of 1/day)</p>	<p><i>Call at least one Goal Team family every day and log into communication tracking system leveraging Goal Coach Check In Protocol below (expectation is that you call all coachee families once every month)</i></p>

On the following pages you will find guidance and exemplars for both types of these relationship building communications: [Phone Calls](#) and [Text Messages](#). Also provided is a CFS for [Family Communication Tracking Systems](#).

For guidance on communication and processes around removal, suspension or expulsion please reference the [17-18 AF Behavior Manual](#). The 18-19 Manual will be available on 6/1.

Family Phone Calls

Purpose: Phone calls are a great medium for when more two way dialogue is needed than the other forms of communication can provide. While calls are necessary for corrections, they should not be used only for that purpose.

Types:

- [Intro](#)
- [Goal Coach Check In](#)
- [Positive](#)
- [Corrective](#)

Intro Phone Call Vision of Excellence

Criteria for Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Use a positive and warm tone throughout<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with concise and to the point language<input type="checkbox"/> Listen Actively (e.g. summarize parent responses, ask follow up questions, use small verbal cues to demonstrate you are listening, explicitly call out places of agreement)<input type="checkbox"/> Convey interest in getting to know the parent and student<input type="checkbox"/> Set the stage for future strong communication (e.g. gather parent preferences for communication, let them know your “door” is open and how they can access you ongoing)

Steps
<p>1) Greeting: Say “hello” to the parent, introduce yourself and make sure they have five minutes to talk <i>Hello, Ms.Mr. _____, My name is _____ from _____. Do you have 5 minutes to talk as I will be _____’s goal coach next year?</i></p>
<p>2) Tell them concisely and specifically why you are calling <i>As I said, I’m calling to introduce myself as I’ll be _____’s goal coach this year and want to kick off our work together.</i></p>
<p>3) Briefly Introduce the Goal Coach role & yourself <i>As a Goal Coach, I meet with your child every day during a special block of ‘goal team time’. The goal team is a smaller group within the school that scholars lean on throughout the year to build an awesomely powerful community and support each other in meeting their goals. My job is to provide an extra layer of support for your child and keep an eye on their progress overall this year - not just in a single subject area. My hope is that we will work really closely together over the course of the year to support _____ in having a fantastic year.</i></p>

4) Get to know the family member

Prioritize a few follow up questions the “questions to get to know the family” list below.

5) Get to know their child.

I'm so excited to meet _____ soon and get to know them as an individual so I can offer the tailored support they need to have a great year. I'd love if you could tell me a little bit about _____.

Prioritize a few follow up questions the “questions to get to know the child” list below.

6) Plan for future communication by gathering parent's preferences and sharing your contact information

As _____'s goal coach we will be in regular contact throughout the year and I want to respect what works best for you. What's the best way to contact you? What times of day work best for calls? Is it okay to text message?

7) Wrap up: Set the expectation for the next point of contact, taking into account their preferences

Questions to get to know the family

- What are your hopes and dreams for your child?
- What role do you want school to play in helping your child realize those hopes and dreams?
- How would you most like to see your scholar progress over the first two months of school (until the first Dream Team meeting)?
- What, if anything, do you remember about _____(insert grade)? Do you have fond memories of the experience?
- What is most important to you in a school? What are your non-negotiables?
- What is most important to you about our relationship? What do you need from me?
- What are you most excited about for the year ahead? What are you most nervous about?
- How do you see yourself being involved in the school this year?
- What talents / hobbies / professions / cultural heritage would you like to share with the class?

Questions to get to know the child

- Does your child have a nickname he/she will want to hear at school? Is it important to you that the school not use nicknames?
- What does your child love to do? What are his/her talents? What is he/she great at?
- Where does your child sometimes need more support from you? Is there anything he/she is struggling with? How would you like support to look at school?
- Who else is really important to your child? Siblings? Cousins? Friends?
- Are there other important adults we should be communicating with and getting to know this year?

Goal Coach → Check In Call

Key Outcomes:

- **Ensure Family + Goal Coach on the same page about the student's progress** (e.g. they have access to the latest progress report, agree upon some basic glows/grows within that progress)

Criteria for Success

- ❑ **Use a positive and warm tone throughout** (e.g. communicate authentic excitement for the student without reservation or condition, express gratitude to families for their partnership)
- ❑ **Go Second:** Resist the urge to direct the content by inviting the family perspective first. Families may shy away from sharing other information if you've already started to direct the conversation to a specific win or challenge.
- ❑ **Balance praise & pushes** to ensure we are constantly pausing to see the good in every child, while still raising the bar on what we know they are capable of achieving
- ❑ **Technical Accuracy:** Put in the work to understand this Scholar's progress and the basics of each paeline before calling home.

Key Steps

1) Greeting: Say "hello" to the parent, introduce yourself and make sure they have five minutes to talk
Hello, Ms.Mr. _____, This is _____ from _____. I'm doing monthly check-ins with the parents of all members of my goal team. Do you have 5-10 minutes to talk about how _____ is doing so that we can both best support him/her?

2) Tell them concisely and specifically why you are calling - and name the rough agenda.
As I mentioned at the start of the year, I'm going to be calling once a month to check in on _____'s progress overall so there are never any surprises in how he is doing and we stay in touch on best ways to support his success. We'll start by sharing any updates ... then, we'll name successes/strengths that _____ has shown in the last month. Finally, we'll name challenges _____ is facing or goals we want _____ to obtain ... and then figure out how we can best support _____.

3) Updates: Invite + Share

Are there any updates on your mind we should make time to discuss today?"

Note: This call should be personalized to the student, so gathering up front what is on the family's mind will help you customize from here.

3) Strengths: Invite + Share

- a) Invite the family perspective on what is going well and why to celebrate and continuously learn what works best for this individual Scholar

What strengths or areas of improvement have you noticed in the past few weeks with Javon?"
What do you think led to that progress?

b) Build on or share additional growth points.

- Build: *I totally agree that _____ has been far more focused. One example of that is*
- Additional: *In addition to what you named, I noticed _____ met his weekly goal the last two weeks and it seems like he is really building a strong Independent Reading habit to get back on pace here.*

c) Invite the parent to reflect on what helped.

- *What do you think helped him make that shift?*

4) Areas for Growth: Invite + Share

a) Invite the family perspective on areas of growth or concerns and what they think might be the root of the challenge for their Scholar.

What concerns or areas of growth are most important to you based on Javon's current progress?"

What do you think is holding him back from seeing improvement here?" or "Why do you think X is so challenging for him right now?"

b) Build on or share additional challenge points

c) Invite the parent to reflect on what helped.

5) Make a collaborative plan:

Let's brainstorm together- what does Javon need most in the new few weeks to grow in (area identified by family)

Note: Ensure actions steps are specific and leverage other members of the child's community (ex: I will talk to Javon's math teacher and set up a call)

Make sure to have at least ONE action the parent will do - and one action the teacher will do

6) Wrap up: Say goodbye and share gratitude for their ongoing partnership

7) Make sure the notes of the conversation are captured in Infinite Campus

Positive Phone Call Vision of Excellence¹

Criteria for Success

- ❑ **Use a positive and warm tone throughout** (e.g. communicate authentic excitement for the student without reservation or condition, express gratitude to parents for their partnership)
- ❑ **Communicate with concise and to the point language** (e.g. name the specific actions the student took you are celebrating, share what you concretely observed v. student traits)
- ❑ **Listen Actively** (e.g. summarize parent responses, ask follow up questions, use small verbal cues to demonstrate you are listening)
- ❑ **Build Positive Momentum** (e.g. work with parents to figure out the root of this success so can work together to keep it going, convey confidence in the student's potential to keep up the action or behavior that led to this success)

Key Steps

- 1) Greeting:** Say "hello" to the parent, introduce yourself and make sure they have five minutes to talk
- 2) Tell them concisely and specifically why you are calling** (e.g. "I'm calling because Maria did a great job during writer's workshop" or "Jennifer is caught on her Math SDL")
- 3) Thank them:** Let families know that you appreciate their role in contributing to the student's accomplishment and how valuable their partnership is to you and the student (e.g. "I know talked a lot about Math SDL at Jennifer's last Dream Team Meeting and it is clear that your support in helping her do Zearn modules at home is making a big difference- thank you")
- 4) Ask if they have any questions for you or if there is anything they think you should do more of/differently, etc. to make sure this behavior continues.** (e.g. "Is there anything I can do to support Jennifer in keeping us this strong progress?")
- 5) Ask if they can pass along the praise** (e.g. "Can you let Jennifer know I called to share this exciting news?")
- 6) Wrap up:** Say goodbye and restate your gratitude

Example Praise Call

Ms. Harper: Hello?

Ms. Longfellow: Hi Ms. Harper, it's Ms. Longfellow, Jacob's Goal Coach.

¹ Call steps have been adapted from Flamboyant Foundation Tools for [Building Relationships with Families](#) and Match Parent Phone Call Training

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Ms. Harper: Oh, hi there.

Ms. Longfellow: I just need two minutes of your time to tell you some great news about Jacob. Is now a good time or would you prefer I call back later?

Ms. Harper: Now is fine.

Ms. Longfellow: I called to tell you that Jacob was incredibly focused during SDL today. Every time I looked at the class, Jacob was doing exactly what he should have been doing – taking notes, working through his playlist. He showed a tremendous amount of focus and determination. As a result of his focus, he not only finished today’s work but actually used this time to get ahead. I think he learned a lot!

Ms. Harper: That’s great! I’m so happy to hear.

Ms. Longfellow: If you have any advice on how to keep up today’s success or anything you think really helped him today, I’d love to know your thoughts.

Ms. Harper: Hmm, well I shared his weekly progress report with him over the weekend and we talked through it together. I know you did that in goal teams, but I think seeing it twice might be good for him.

Ms. Longfellow: We find messages likely the weekly report can be more powerful coming from families than just from class so I think that would be a great strategy to keep up. Would you mind passing the compliment to him? I want him to know exactly what he did well today so that he can continue to do it. I am especially pleased with how fast he jumped to it whenever a direction was given. I really want him to know that you and I notice and celebrate when he is doing well.

Ms. Harper: I’d be more than happy to pass the news along. Thank you for calling.

Ms. Longfellow: Of course! I look forward to speaking with you again soon. Goodbye.

Ms. Harper: Goodbye.

Correction Call Vision of Excellence

Criteria for Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Use a warm tone that conveys concern for the student<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with concise and to the point language (e.g. simply state the challenge, name the specific choices you see the student making without adding commentary or judgement)<input type="checkbox"/> Listen Actively (e.g. summarize parent responses, ask follow up questions, use small verbal cues to demonstrate you are listening, explicitly call out places of agreement)<input type="checkbox"/> Ask for advice (e.g. “I know you are the expert on your child and I could really use your help here”)<input type="checkbox"/> Co-create high impact solutions, follow through, and follow up

Key Steps
1) Greeting: Say “hi” to the parent: Introduce yourself and make sure they have five minutes to talk
2) Tell them why you are calling: This should be very specific, communicate concern for the student <i>(e.g. “Usually Javon stays focused the entire time during IR which is why I’m concerned that Javon has fallen behind on his Independent Reading goals for 3 weeks in a row and the more this continues it will only get harder and harder for him to catch up on the important reading time he needs to grow . I’d love to problem solve together how we can support Javon with this challenge”)</i>
3) Seek out additional context that might help you both understand the cause of the challenge <i>(e.g. “Is anything going on with Javon that might be contributing to him falling behind on the independent reading time?” Or “Have you noticed similar behaviors at home?”)</i>
4) Work together to develop next steps: Share what you’ve tried so far to support the student and ask the parent or family member for additional suggestions. If they struggle to offer, you can help generate suggestions.
5) Wrap up: Express gratitude for their partnership, your commitment to the student and say goodbye <i>(e.g. “I’m so grateful for the additional ideas you helped me generate today. I feel really hopeful that these specific steps will really help Javon because I know if he puts in that IR time- he is going to love reading more and more as he becomes a stronger reader. Have a great night”)</i>

Example Correction Call

Ms. Cook: Hello?

Ms. Smith: Hi Ms. Cook, it’s Ms. Smith. Nash’s goal coach.

Ms. Cook: Hello.

Ms. Smith: How are you doing this afternoon?

Ms. Cook: I'm doing well thank you. How are you?

Ms. Smith: I'm fine, thanks. I'd appreciate 5 minutes of your time to talk about Nash. He's been experiencing a challenge in class, and I'd love to problem-solve this quickly with you. Is this a good time for you?

Ms. Cook: Yes, now is fine.

Ms. Smith: As you know, Nash is a really social student, has a lot of friends, and likes to talk a lot.

Ms. Cook: Yes, I know. He always has been really social. Is that getting him in trouble?

Ms. Smith: I think these social skills will serve him well in life – but he has got to learn that there is a time and place to be social. I try to give the scholars chances to talk and work together at different points in the lesson. Unfortunately, right now, Nash is talking to his neighbors when I am teaching and scholars are supposed to be listening carefully. This means he is missing a lot of essential content. Today there were three different times when Nash was talking in the middle of the lesson. I tried a few things to address this. First, I reminded the whole class of the expectation. When Nash continued to choose to talk, I then redirected him specifically with a tap on the shoulder. When the behavior continued, I gave him a demerit. In fact, Nash has earned five demerits for talking in the last two days. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to make a difference - and I don't like that he is earning so many demerits and detentions. More importantly, I'm concerned that he is missing important material and as a result, his classwork and homework grades are suffering. Any idea what might be going on?

Ms. Cook: No. I mean, he's talkative, but he always has been. I don't have any issues with him following my directions. He'll get silly, but he knows when it's time to settle down and focus.

Ms. Smith: In this situation, his talking during class is really hurting him and distracting his classmates. I would love your help. Do you have any suggestions?

Ms. Cook: I will definitely speak with him as soon as he gets home. He knows that talking over you is disrespectful and I will explain how it is hurting his grades. Maybe you could also move his seat away from his friends?

Ms. Smith: I will try him in another seat – that's a good idea. Thanks for agreeing to talk to him. Can you also address the impact that it is having on the other students in the class?

Ms. Cook: I sure will. He needs to get his grades up and those other kids don't need to be distracted either.

Ms. Smith: Thank you for your help here, Ms. Cook. I will give you a quick call tomorrow evening to follow up and let you know how Nash does in class tomorrow. Or would a text message be better?

Ms. Cook: A text would be great since I am working tomorrow night. Thank you for calling to let me know what's going on.

Ms. Smith: Of course. I hope you have a great night!

Ms. Cook: Good night.

Family Text Messages

Purpose: Text messages are an efficient way to maintain regular communication with families and to offer insight into their child’s experience at school using photos and real time updates.

Criteria for Success

- Ensure you have families “OK” to send text messages
- Prioritize the right stuff for texting (e.g. student photos, short reminders, praise) and save more complex conversations for a phone call or meeting
- Keep messages brief and to the point
- Maintain professional language, even though the format of text messaging may feel less formal

Exemplars:

Text Type	Purpose	Example	Key Steps
Posi-Picture	To <u>show</u> both students and families a concrete proof point of growth or success	Tavanna – Check out this picture of you working on SDL. You look JUST like the picture on our visual anchor ... I’m going to text it to your mom. Ms. Jones – Thought you'd enjoy seeing the fun we had today at lunch. Your daughter has an infectious curiosity and the spirit of an explorer!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Snap a picture that demonstrates a Compass Habit or a goal being met ● Be specific about what exactly you are praising ● (If during class) Show to student before or after you sent it
Posi-text	To focus on bright spots and show families all the excellence we notice in working with their child	“James, you were on fire today. You _____, and this showed _____. I am going to text your mom right now. Read the text I wrote here. Will you hit send for me?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Call the student by name. ● Make a general statement of enthusiasm. ● Show the note / text picture. ● Ask the student to hit send. ● Fist bump or sugar at the end.
Update Text	To offer families a window into what is happening at school. Students don’t always share the hit and this offers families helpful fodder to engage at the daily/weekly level.	“Quick news from Kindergarten! Our habit of the week is EMPATHY. Check out our list of examples of empathy in action and see how many your child can practice this week!” “It is experiment day in the Science lab! Check out ...”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prioritize updates that are important, especially if they can spark conversation with their scholars ● These are different from a posi text in that it doesn’t need to be individual to the student
Reminder Text	To support families by bringing front of mind key action steps.	“Hope you had a great weekend Mr. Turner. Daniel can’t wait to see you at his next Dream Team. Please sign up for your time slot today at this link to get the best option!”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use a positive and warm tone (e.g. no nagging or scolding) ● Include any links or other info families need to take action

Family Communication Tracking

It's essential that each school have a clear family communication tracking system to ensure that each family is being contacted regularly and so that teachers and leaders can see who else is contacting certain families they also maybe contacting since an entire grade team works with the same set of students.

Criteria for Success

- Teachers are easily able to access families phone numbers
- Teachers can both see who they've contacted and who other teachers have contacted
- Each teacher phone call to a family is logged in the tracker
- Communication about removals, suspension or detention follows all legal network protocols and guidance
- There is a system owner who's responsible for weekly review and management of tracker
- Data from the tracker on communication is shared publicly for accountability and used to ID strong teachers with potential best practices
- Ideally the types of communication (check in, positive/praise, concern) are indicated in system as well

18-19 Recommendation:

- **System:** It is our strong recommendation that Schools use IC to log family phone calls. IC currently contains all family contact information already and allows for logging of phone calls. The IC Contact Log [is here](#). Information on this is set up [is here](#). For teacher facing instructions and more details reference [the systems guide](#).
- **Owner:** We also recommend that the DOS is the system owner in terms of expectations on when communication is logged and accountability. They should partners with the SSM to set up the right fields and reports at the start of the year