

# Effective Home/School Communication, Virtually!

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## **FACING FALL:**



**FFF ANSWERS YOUR  
QUESTIONS ABOUT  
VIRTUAL LEARNING  
AND SPECIAL NEEDS**



# Who we are...

- ▶ Formed Families Forward, a family-led resource center in No Va
- ▶ Provide training and direct support to foster, adoptive and kinship families who are raising children and youth with special educational needs, and professionals who work with our families.
- ▶ We offer free training, *Stronger Together* peer support groups, consultations to families, events, resources, classes, and systems navigation. **New Respite program! Oct 17 family event!**
- ▶ Family partner to Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS)

[www.FormedFamiliesForward.org](http://www.FormedFamiliesForward.org)

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# Learning Intentions

- Review new uses for traditional and new technologies and approaches for communication between home and school
- Communication hurdles
- Rules of thumb for communication
- Tackle Email etiquette
- What and how to share about your child

# (New) Options for Communication!

New uses of traditional communication methods:

- ▶ Emails
- ▶ Phone calls

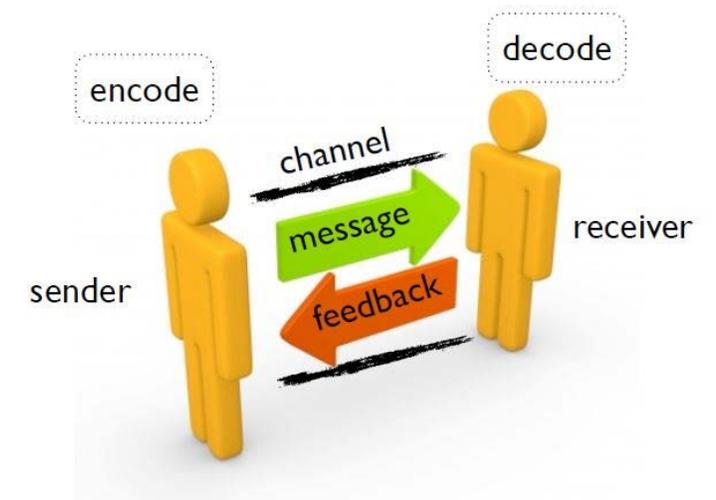
New communication methods:

- Tools embedded in virtual learning platforms (Blackboard Collaborate; Canvas; Schoology)
- Tools embedded in school/educator communication and management apps (Classroom Dojo; Google Classroom; Remind)
- Social media
- Texts

# Barriers- Communication in Virtual Era

- ▶ No in-person connections (student OR parent/caregiver)
- ▶ Our traditional channels of communication are unavailable.
- ▶ Tone, emotion, emphasis and body language is often difficult to interpret virtually.
- ▶ Feedback may be delayed or absent.
- ▶ Confidentiality may be more difficult to maintain.

## The interpersonal communication process



# Communication basics

- ▶ Consider the What and the Why of your message
- ▶ Active voice
- ▶ Don't assume knowledge; Build information piece by piece
- ▶ Leave out unnecessary details
- ▶ Rule of three; beginning, middle, end
- ▶ Include:
  - ▶ The Ask
  - ▶ The How
  - ▶ Thank You

# Emails- When

## Use when:

- you need to get in touch with a person who is hard to reach via telephone
- the information you want to share is not time-sensitive
- you need to distribute information to a large number of people quickly
- you need a written record of the communication

## Don't use when:

- your message is long and complicated or requires additional discussion that would best be accomplished in real time.
- information is highly confidential. Email is NEVER private!
- your message is emotionally charged or the tone of the message could be easily misconstrued.

# Emails- How

- ▶ Use some greeting and sign-off.
- ▶ Think about your message before you write it. Don't send email in haste.
  - ▶ Decide on purpose of message and desired outcome
  - ▶ Consider your message's audience and what they may need in order for your message to have the intended result.
- ▶ Reflect on the tone of your message. When you are communicating via email, your words are not supported by gestures, voice inflections, or other cues, so it may be easier for someone to misread your tone.

# Emails- the What

- Strive for **clarity and brevity** in writing.
- Briefly **state purpose** for writing in the very beginning message.
- Be sure to provide reader with some **context**; brief background, attachments.
- **Separate** emails for different needs.
- State the desired **outcome** at the end of message. Be specific re: type of responses required, due dates, etc.
- End with the **next step**, what is expected and by whom.
- Format message so it's **easy to read**. Use white space to visually separate paragraphs. Bullet important details so that they are easy to pick out. Use bold face type or capital letters to highlight critical information, such as due dates.

# Supporting Your Student's Emails

## HOW TO EMAIL A TEACHER

### 1 SUBJECT LINE

2-5 word summary of the email

- Missing Grade
- Homework Question
- Late Work

### 2 BEGIN WITH A GREETING

- Good Morning
- Hello
- Good Afternoon

This is in the body  
of the email



### 3 BODY OF THE EMAIL

- I am writing because.....
- I need help help.....
- I am confused by.....

### 4 CLOSING

- Thank you
- Have a nice day!



### 5 SIGN YOUR NAME!

#### General Tips:

- Be sure to use proper capitalization & punctuation.
- Always use proper grammar.
- Plz spell out ur words.
  - Please spell out your words.

# Ways to **Proactively** Avoid Conflict with School Staff



# Communication between caregivers at home and at school

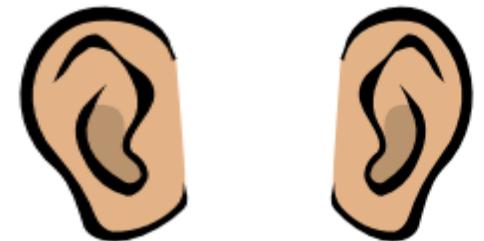
Consider how to inform school:

- ❖ Letter, meetings, documentation
    - ▶ How much to share; what is the need to know?
    - ▶ Who shares?
  - ❖ Practice your 1-minute elevator speech- what is essential for staff to know about YOUR child.
- Does your child have a speech too?



# Strategies for being heard

- Beforehand, think and write out your main points- what do you want for your child as a result of the meeting/conversation?
- Have another adult with you.
- If you don't understand something, ask.
- Clarify your understanding.
- End conversation/leave meeting only after a plan for future steps is developed and responsible parties identified.
- Keep records of all communications.



# Back to School: Why "All About Me"?

- ▶ A positive student profile helps quickly and visually orient teachers and other staff with whom your child will be working
- ▶ Clarifies important family and other background information
- ▶ Clearly states what information is/is not to be shared
- ▶ Succinctly states strengths/challenges
- ▶ Leaves no room for lack of contact!

## All About Me

Name:

Photo

You will see me for: (fill in classes, times, periods, etc.)

I am good at:

Interests

Academics

Hobbies

Sports

Personality traits, etc.

I have trouble with:

You should know: family information, medical information, etc.

I do/don't want this information shared with other students.

What works for me at school:

Physical arrangement of room, lesson preparation/ academic accommodations, assignments, test taking, organization, behavior/ reinforcement, health/medication, home/school communication, etc.

Contact me by

Student email, cell, home phone; study hall or support periods?

Contact my parents/caregivers by

Email, phones, times of day, preferred frequency of contacts

Form in Word & format guide at [https://www.formedfamiliesforward.org/resource\\_category/special-education-advocacy/](https://www.formedfamiliesforward.org/resource_category/special-education-advocacy/)

# Jennifer West “Communication Partners”

**Who?** Parent/Teacher, Parent/Case Manager, Parent/Admin Designee

**What?** Student progress, Academic/Home changes, S/E well-being

**When?** At least: Monthly, Quarterly Conference, IT/IEP/Eligibility Meetings

**How?** Video Conference, Phone, Email, Face to Face (by appointment)

**Why?** To ensure that you and the school are partners to promote the best learning outcomes for your student

# Discussion Time!

- ▶ Chat your question or comment in.
- ▶ Andersen or Kelly will ask question or call on you and unmute you if possible.
- ▶ Brief and succinct questions and comments allow us to get to more questions!
  
- ▶ Remember to Like us on Facebook- <https://www.facebook.com/FormedFamiliesForward> and follow us on Insta and Twitter.
- ▶ Ask your questions for FFF at <http://tiny.cc/fallquestions>
- ▶ Please complete the BRIEF evaluation at end. Join us for the next session on October 7, 2020, on self-care!