

Start the new school year with an effective communication system

September doesn't just mark the beginning of a new school year: it also means the start of new working relationships, new environments and new challenges.

Clear communication between colleagues and students can provide a strong basis for effective behaviour management and proactive teaching.

At the start of a new school year, it is very easy to form the wrong impression of individuals who are new to you based on their reputations. This applies to both staff and students. It is also all too easy to slip back into ways of working which feel familiar but are not always the most effective.

Certainly, this is the time of year when students are already beginning to shape their thinking about which class they are in and which members of staff they will be working with and for some, their thoughts and expectations will be based on rumours and inaccurate stories. This is also true for members of staff.

The new school year will also mean new working partnerships for staff members. Classroom and teaching assistants will have changed from last year. New teaching staff will no doubt have joined the school. How well do you know each other? How consistent will you be when working with another adult in your department or classroom? And many more How's.

Most members of staff will have already spent time in school prior to the term starting to prepare the environment – seating plans, displays, equipment and so on. But how much time has been spent on sourcing background information on students, becoming familiar with IEPs (*Individualized Education Program*) and behaviour plans for individuals and, perhaps most importantly, meeting and planning with colleagues? Once the term has started, time becomes very precious and missed planning time often then becomes only good intentions, leading to difficulties later.

Communication systems differ greatly from school to school.

Word of mouth backed up by written records is often the chosen method, but don't forget to consult any electronic tracking systems which your school may be operating. This should include information not just from school-based staff, but also from parents, outside agencies and pupils. The most effective communication involves objective, factual information; there is a danger in placing too much emphasis on subjective opinion. Positive communication and planning will lead to the creation of effective teaching and learning environments and thus reduce the need for behaviour management.

Practical tips

There is a danger of stating the obvious when listing essential elements of good communication systems in schools but it's perhaps worth generating a communications checklist for the start of the new term:

1. Make sure that you have access to, and are familiar with, up-to-date information on all the students you will be teaching this year. Include individual records, IEPs and any information from parents and outside agencies.
2. Ensure that you are able to put in place all arrangements as agreed in any behaviour plans. This may involve changes to your seating plans, access to equipment and differentiation of curriculum material.
3. Be fully aware of and in agreement with school behaviour policies. These should be operated at three levels; whole school, group and individual.
4. Get to know your colleagues and discuss your responsibilities, roles and styles of approach
5. Operate one-to-one meetings with challenging students in an effort to problem-solve rather than hope the problems will go away.
6. Ensure that you keep up-to-date and accurate records of behaviour.
7. Spend some time rehearsing and practising your own styles of approach (self-calming, using positive praise and so on).
8. Be prepared to change systems and approaches which don't appear to be working: remember, it is highly unlikely that one style of behaviour management will fit all.

Ideas for Effective Communication between Home and School

Ideas for Parents and Professionals

Parents, teachers, and support staff all have the same goal, a child's learning, but sometimes communication breakdowns cause inefficiency and disagreement in accomplishing this goal. This article includes ideas for establishing communication systems to make this the best and most effective year yet.

1. Communicate Early – Communicate early either in written form or through a conversation at the beginning of the school year. Early communication sets the stage for yearlong collaboration by establishing a system and setting expectations.

Professionals – Let parents know classroom expectations, schedules, important dates, and contact information for other professionals working with their child.

Parents – Be sure you provide current records and updated information

2. Have a Consistent System – Establish a communication system that works for both professionals and families. Some people communicate well over email while others like to have printed information in a folder or notebook

Professionals – For regular communication use a format that is accessible to all families. Communication encourages a running dialogue and often results in new information that can translate into effective classroom results.

Parents – Keep professionals up to date about home progress as well as any physical (e.g. child isn't sleeping well) or emotional (e.g. a pet passed away) changes at home.

3. Be Positive – Notes, phone calls, and emails frequently are used for negative rather than positive communication. This can create a situation where parents and professionals prefer not to hear from each other. Keep positive news part of updates. Be sure to highlight progress in difficult areas and note when the child is making progress on a skill. Compliment the other person's hard work and note when a child is accomplishing goals due to work in other environments.

4. Understand Limitations – People balance professional and personal lives and it is important to respect their time. Communicate, have patience, and remember everyone has the same goal.

Communication Skills - Start Here!

Effective communication is all about conveying your messages to other people clearly and unambiguously. It's also about receiving information that others are sending to you, with as little distortion as possible.

In fact, communication is only successful when both the sender and the receiver understand the same information as a result of the communication. Being able to communicate effectively is therefore essential if you want to build a successful career. We at nmcQC coach on the process through below:

Source...

As the source of the message, you need to be clear about why you're communicating and what you want to communicate.

Message...

The message is the information that you want to communicate.

Encoding...

This is the process of transferring the information you want to communicate into a form that can be sent and correctly decoded at the other end. A key part of this knows your audience: Failure to understand who you are communicating with will result in delivering messages that are misunderstood.

Channel...

Messages are conveyed through channels, with verbal channels including face-to-face meetings, telephone and videoconferencing; and written channels including letters, emails, memos and reports.

Decoding...

Just as successful encoding is a skill, so is successful decoding (involving, for example, taking the time to read a message carefully, or listen actively to it.) Just as confusion can arise from errors in encoding, it can also arise from decoding errors..

Receiver...

Your message is delivered to individual members of your audience To be a successful communicator, you should consider these before delivering your message, and act appropriately.

Feedback...

Pay close attention to feedback, as it is the only thing that can give you confidence that your audience has understood your message. If you find that there has been a misunderstanding, at least you have the opportunity to send the message a second time.

Context...

The situation in which your message is delivered is the context. This may include the surrounding environment or broader culture (corporate culture, international cultures, and so on).

Removing Barriers at All These Stages

To deliver your messages effectively, you must commit to breaking down the barriers that exist within each of these stages of the communication process. Barriers in context tend to stem from senders offering too much information too fast. When in doubt here, less is oftentimes more. It is best to be mindful of the demands on other people's time, especially in today's ultra-busy society.

Once you understand this, you need to work to understand your audience's culture, making sure you can converse and deliver your message to people of different backgrounds and cultures within your own organization, in your country and even abroad.

This where the nmcQC comes to your help ion a professional way with our equally powerful techniques as a lifetime wealth to all staff members. The first skill that you'll learn in this communications skills section of nmcQC course is 'How to Make a Great First Impression':

**Once attending this course,
I want my customers to really be "cheerleaders" for my
business too, which I am sure that you will be!!
We depend on your word of mouth to your friend!**