



Coach teachers on how to communicate in writing with parents

Share these tips with your teachers on communicating with parents via email and text.

- **Remember that anything communicated in writing lasts forever.** The rules that you learned as a child -- be polite, be courteous, be prompt -- those all apply in communicating with parents, said Kim Croyle, a school attorney for [Bowles Rice LLP](#) in Morgantown, W.Va. Don't say something that you might regret later.

"Stick to objective information and be responsive to what the parent is asking or requesting," Croyle said. "Avoid any embellishments, platitudes, or things that you know are not correct, like, 'We never do this in our school system.' There's no place for that language. Be thoughtful."

- **Be alert to issues that signal the need to come back to the team.** If anything comes up in communication with parents that may impact the student's IEP or 504 plan, call the team back together, Croyle said.

"Something may need to be changed," she said. "The teacher needs to be very careful about making unilateral changes to the IEP or 504 plan without going through the proper procedures guaranteed to parents and students with disabilities."

- **Be careful about disclosing confidential information about other students.** This can happen inadvertently when you are in open communication back and forth with parents, Croyle said. For example, saying something like, "Sally played with Susie. This is the first time both of them have used their communication skills," may lead to trouble. "The information about Susie doesn't need to be stated to Sally's mom," Croyle said. "Those are the types of things you need to avoid."

- **Avoid tit for tat response.** Parents might say things in an email or text that you don't like as a teacher, Croyle said. Don't respond in kind, she said. Instead, go to the principal and say, "This isn't working out; what can we do?"

In email or texts, it's easy to fire off something without thinking of the consequences of what someone will think when they read it, Croyle said. "That's the surest way for bad communication to start."

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