Communication PRinciples for Principals

MAY 2010

HELPING PARENTS STAY CONNECTED AND INVOLVED



As a school system, we believe that parental involvement is critical to the effective management of our schools and the achievement of our students. Parents are important stakeholders and serve as an integral part of the entire education process.

DoDEA HQ Communications Office

4040 North Fairfax Drive Arlington, VA 22203

Telephone: 703.588.3030 **Facsimile:** 703.588.3000

Frank O'Gara: 703.588.3260 Frank.O'Gara@hq.dodea.edu Elaine Kanellis: 703.588.3265 Elaine.Kanellis@hq.dodea.edu

Visit the DoDEA website for more information. http://www.dodea.edu

Parents are definitely part of the team

In DoDEA, we will continue to promote the message that parents are definitely part of Team DoDEA when it comes to education. We have created multiple avenues for parental input through School Advisory processes, Customer Satisfaction Surveys, PTAs/PTOs Town Hall Meetings, and the DoDEA Chain of Command. Regular communication is encouraged through parent conferences, progress reports, and the use of GradeSpeed. Each of these avenues should be regularly advertised to the community through local websites, school newsletters and handbooks, at community meetings, and through the command information channels in your communities.

Accordingly, our schools are open campuses for parent visits and participation. We encourage parents to contact teachers and visit classrooms to share, support, and celebrate the learning experiences of their children. We also invite parents to school events and extracurricular activities. This relationship between parents and the schools is a healthy, supportive partnership that contributes immeasurably to the excellence of DoDEA schools around the world.

This tip sheet will give you ideas and talking points to help parents understand the avenues we provide for them to have input, get involved, share suggestions, and express concerns.

In our schools, parents can volunteer to serve on numerous committees such as the School Advisory Council (SAC), Parent Teacher Association or Organization (PTA/PTO), and Booster Clubs. Parents can also volunteer throughout the school and help with extra curricular activities.

Two-way communication is a critical area of focus for our system and its customers. Are parents and visitors going to see that it is a strong focus at your school? Are they aware of the chain of command for resolving issues?

Parents are always encouraged and welcome to send us their thoughts and comments regarding any aspect of their child's education. During the school year, they can do this by talking with their child's teacher or principal. They can also send a message to their child's teacher, or principal.

Developing, promoting, and maintaining communication to enhance student development

Parents are important members of their child's educational community. All community members – teachers, principals, school staff members, parents, and members of the local community have a significant impact on a child's education. Working together, all members enhance student development every day. Parents can help strengthen partnerships and communication with their school community in a variety of ways.

- » Attend parent-teacher conferences and work closely with teachers to reinforce instruction at home.
- » Volunteer in the classroom and with special school programs when possible.
- » Share experiences and knowledge with students in the classroom and in after-school programs.
- » Routinely review school newsletters and websites to stay connected with events, programs, and initiatives at your child's school.
- » Participate in school surveys and DoDEA Customer Satisfaction Surveys. Provide feedback to teachers and school administrators.
- » Communicate with your child's teacher and principal share your concerns and respond to teachers to improve success for students.

Other avenues of input for parents include...

- » School Advisory Committee
- » Installation Advisory Committee (Note: Suggestions or unresolved issues from these committees work their way through the advisory committee/council process including Component Commanders Councils; European Schools Council; Pacific Theatre Education Council (PTEC); Dependents Education Council (DEC); and ACDE)
- » Continuous Improvement Process
- » DoDEA Websites
- » Parent Teacher Organization/Parent Teacher Association (PTO/PTA)
- » School Liaison Officers
- » Command Channels
- » Quality of Life Conferences

DoDEA's efforts are focused on highest student achievement. Your children are the core of everything we do. For us, it's all about the children, just as it is for you.





Resolving issues that may arise

The best resolution to challenges and issues that arise between parents and schools is almost always one that is reached locally. When parents raise a concern about their child, link the parent with the child's teacher. Frequent contact between parents and teachers is the best way to resolve issues and clarify misconceptions.

If parents aren't comfortable talking to a teacher, there are a number of school professionals who can help facilitate a conference. The school counselor, psychologist, assistant principal, or the school liaison officer (SLO) often fulfill that role.

Sometimes, parents and teachers are going to disagree. It is then appropriate to elevate the concern to the school principal level.

If parents and the principal can't bring resolution to a problem, the District Superintendent is always available to meet with parents. The remaining appeals follow the chain of command for resolution.

The Chain of Command

It helps to outline the chain of command in every handbook and on your website. Another way to visually display the chain of command is to post photos in each school office showing the lines of authority for education and school operations. Photos for our senior leaders are available in the downloads section of the DoDEA website http://www.dodea.edu/pressroom/downloads.cfm. Photos displayed at the school level should be current.

- » Commander in Chief -- President Barack Obama
- » Secretary of Defense Dr. Robert M. Gates
- » Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Dr. Clifford Stanley
- » Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (DUSD) for Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) Vacant
- » Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (DUSD) for Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) Vacant
- » DoDEA Director Dr. Shirley Miles
- » Area Director -- (Americas, Europe, Pacific)
- » Area Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (Americas, Europe, Pacific)
- » District Superintendent
- » Principal

Parents and teachers...A partnership that matters

Parents are their child's first teachers. Being aware, informed, and involved can help parents have a positive, lasting effect on their child's education and the DoDEA school system. Their concern, commitment, and experience are invaluable in creating a community of life-long learners who are prepared to enter the 21st Century.

