Communication is key to creating strong family partnerships. Build trust through honest, thoughtful, nonjudgmental sharing of ideas.

Communicate frequently, regularly, and predictably.

LISTEN with an open heart and mind.

1. **Send out a communication before school starts to:**
   - Introduce yourself and your experience teaching.
   - Communicate care and respect for their child’s well-being and success.
   - Let the family know that you welcome their child and look forward to getting to know them.
   - Provide information about routines such as grading updates, availability for live communication (“office hours”), and which teacher will be their main contact.
   - Ask for family input on preferred methods and times for communication.

2. **Provide multiple communication methods and alternatives** for families, considering different accessibility options:
   - Phone, email, video call, text message
   - Paper note (snail mail or back pack)
   - Text apps:
     - **Remind** (translates into other languages, sends documents)
     - **Bloomz** (gives updates, tracks performance)
     - **ClassDojo** (creates positive class culture)
     - **TalkingPoints** (translates into other languages)
     - **SchoolMessenger** (is a central place to access information/notices)
3. **Individualize communications.**
   - If a student lives in 2 households, ask for a schedule and be prepared to send multiple communications and documents to each house.
   - For families who are non-native English speakers, try to use the family’s primary language. [Google Translate](https://translate.google.com) may not be perfect, but will show you are trying.
   - If a student has a complex disability, the family will need to provide extensive supports at home, just like you do for instruction. Consider that when sending work home.

4. **Focus on the positive.**
   - If you need to communicate a problem, then also share successes twice as often.
   - Presume competence and hold high expectations; send age-appropriate assignments that are adapted for successful completion.
   - Presume positive intent on the part of parents; they are doing the best they can.
   - For students with limited verbal communication, consider having a peer write a positive note about the day in the student’s home-school communication book.

5. **Consider a monthly class newsletter.**
   - Explain the focus of instruction for the coming month.
   - Highlight student accomplishments, including a picture of a wall of student work.
   - Make sure the diversity of your class is represented.
   - Include your students with disabilities in all aspects of your news.
   - For students with limited verbal communication or who are learning English, offer an adapted version with pictures and/or other languages.

6. **Things to remember:**
   - Be thoughtful about the words you use, especially in writing. Humor, which is easily understood in person, may not come through in print.
   - If families are not responding to your written communications, try a phone call.
   - Communicate clearly, positively, and always with an eye on finding solutions.
   - Follow up phone calls with emails documenting your communication to make sure you share understanding – even just to say “thank you!”

> “Whatever words we utter should be chosen with care for people will hear them and be influenced by them for good.”

Buddha