

Effective Parent Communications Norms

A Commitment to Build Positive Partnerships

Butler 53 Faculty, Staff and Administration are committed to building positive partnerships with parents and all stakeholder groups including Oak Brook Education Association (OBEA), Butler 53 PTO, and the Board of Education. We believe positive communications between all stakeholders lead to effective outcomes. Together, we can work to meet realistic, but challenging goals for academic achievement. Our partnership is a two-way street. We share a vision for competent and confident Butler School District 53 graduates to succeed in future academic and social endeavors as curious and persistent scholars, caring human beings, and community-minded individuals.

Desired Outcome

Butler 53 strives to provide an excellent educational experience for all students. In order to achieve our mission, we are charged with hiring and maintaining an exceptional workforce. Significant district resources are dedicated to recruiting, training, and retaining our professional staff. Staff members who work in a respectful environment are more likely to invest fully in their jobs, extend themselves beyond basic job functions, and commit their skills and talents to Butler 53 for many years. A respectful environment can be achieved by parents and teachers seeing and treating one another as partners, and engaging in collaborative and positive interactions.

When parents and teachers function as partners in the educational process, the results for children are optimal. We ask that parents choose to be very intentional about building positive, respectful interactions with their children's teachers. Respectful interactions are characterized by trust, kindness, and open communication. By modeling effective problem-solving behaviors, parents and teachers are strengthening students' interpersonal and communication skills to prepare them to demonstrate personal and social integrity. In turn, children can apply these skills to their peer relationships, maintain a positive mindset, and increase their independence.

Parental Involvement

In order to assure collaborative relationships between students' families and the School District personnel, and to enable all parents/guardians to become active partners in education, the school personnel will:

- Keep parents and guardians informed about their child's school and education.
- Encourage involvement in their child's school and education.
- Establish effective two-way communication between all families and the District's personnel.
- Seek input from parents and guardians on significant school related issues.
- Inform parents and guardians on how they can assist their children's learning.

Parent and Visitor Code of Conduct and Communication

The school is a place of learning; therefore, there must be an atmosphere based on mutual respect and trust as stated in the Instructional Blueprint. All students, staff, parents and visitors should be dedicated to creating an optimal learning and educational environment. We expect all stakeholders to adhere to the following behavior code:

- Be courteous when communicating and always assume positive intention.
- Recognize the value of instructional time and activities during the school day. Refrain from disruption of instruction.
- Demonstrate respect for the learning environment and school property.
- Promote the dignity and self worth of others.
- Demonstrate respect for the rights, property and feelings of others.
- Avoid confrontations, profanity, and aggressive behavior.
- Avoid negative behaviors which detract from a productive and positive learning environment:
 - Bullying, vandalism, slander, intimidation and harassment are not acceptable and will not be tolerated.
 - Refrain from verbal harassment, the use of negative racial or ethnic comments, and/or the use of profanity or obscene language.
- Additional information on visitor conduct and prohibited behaviors on school property can be found in Board **Policy 9000**.

Annual Parent Teacher Communication Commitments

We believe in conducting positive communications that lead to effective outcomes. Therefore, we have instituted ways to provide regular communications about student performance to families.

- Returned school work
- Parent Teacher Conferences, 1-2 per year
- PowerSchool Gradebook (Grades 4-8)
- Google Classroom and/or teacher webpage updates (Grades K-8)
- Teacher contact through personal communications (emails, phone calls, meetings)
- Reports of standardized testing results
- Student Progress Reports (Three times per year grades K-5; four times per year grades 6-8)

Respectful Use of Staff Time

Teachers have approximately 30-45 minutes per day for instructional planning and returning all parent communications (phone and email messages). We ask parents to consider these constraints when formulating their communications, so as not to take away from instructional planning and communication with other families unnecessarily.

We ask parents to consider the following before reaching out to teachers:

1. Is this communication necessary? Has the information already been shared or is it available on Google Classroom or the teacher's webpage?
2. Can the teacher respond to this email or phone inquiry in five minutes or less?
3. Have I sent an extraordinary number of emails or are my emails so complex that they will require significant teacher's time in drafting a response?

The District Office and each school sends critical group communications on a regular basis. Taking time to read these communications before stopping by the school, picking up the phone, or sending an email, can save staff members a considerable amount of time each day.

We want staff members to manage time effectively, and we hope that parents will contribute to this goal. We ask parents to work with us to show care and appreciation to our staff so they return to school refreshed and energized each day.

Appropriate Conflict Resolution

Parents are encouraged to communicate with their child's teachers regarding all aspects of the school program. If a specific concern arises, it is required that the parent first discuss the concern with the teacher before approaching the administration or Board of Education. A time may come when a parent has concerns or questions related to a specific staff member or teacher. On such occasions, parents must follow school policy related to communication as outlined below:

1. The first interaction must be directly with the individual staff member or teacher in question with the goal of gathering additional information to ensure parents have all the information related to the situation in question. The discussion should be calm and respectful. Taking time to welcome input and gather the teacher's perspective before reacting will contribute to a positive resolution.
2. If the issue remains unresolved, the building principal should be informed. In accordance with Board **Policy 9010**, principals will refrain from meeting with parents regarding a classroom or teacher issue if the parent has failed to contact the teacher directly.
3. Unresolved issues at the building level, which have involved previous communications with the teacher/staff member and principal, may be taken for further review to the Superintendent. In accordance with Board **Policy 9010**, the Superintendent will redirect parents back to the school if the previous communication steps were skipped.
4. Unresolved issues at the building and district level, which have involved previous communications with the teacher/staff member, principal and superintendent, may be taken for further review to the Board of Education. Please send Board Member emails to Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent at the Butler 53 District office. According to Board **Policy 1108**, Board Members must refer concerns to the appropriate level of authority for school related matters.

Negative Behaviors

Negative communication and conduct behaviors are counterproductive to the educational

experience and will not be tolerated. Negative behaviors are characterized by harassment, intimidation, bullying, raised voices, disrespectful tones, untrue statements, unkind statements, careless gossip, slander, lies, and/or angry dialogue. We ask that parents refrain from speaking in a derogatory manner about staff and/or in a manner that is harmful to their relationships with other families and staff. These behaviors set a poor example for children and create a harmful work environment making teacher retention difficult.

Example Situation

One of the more frequent concerns related to the need for effective communication pertains to student involvement in extracurricular programming. We have a rich co-curricular program in Butler 53 affording an array of programming for students with diverse interests. Board policy dictates that teachers have the sole responsibility for determining teams and selection criteria for extracurricular programming. Extracurricular activities are a privilege, not a right. (Board Policy 7220). Inappropriate interactions with staff and dishonesty can be very disruptive to the learning culture. Parents who engage in negative interactions (i.e. use of aggressive tones, unwillingness to listen with an attempt to resolve, pushing to get their way, demonstration of an agitated state, elevated voices, and/or other displays of anger) will experience student consequences that involve progressive discipline, including removal from programming. Disciplinary action may progress up to and including suspension. Negative interactions or undermining of the teachers may additionally cause students to be removed from core courses taught by the affected teacher, which may then result in independent learning. The Board of Education is required to ensure a harassment free work environment. For that reason, all persons on school property and at school events must not engage in negative interactions with staff, behave with unsportsmanlike manners, disrupt or adversely affect the functioning of the school environment (Board Policy 9000). We ask that every parent and student commit to teamwork, honesty, and positive communication with District 53 students and staff.

Actions to Address Harassing and Intimidating Behavior

Butler School District 53 is a Nationally Acclaimed School District with an impeccable reputation for excellence and consistent delivery of quality instruction. Faculty and staff deserve to be treated with respect during each and every encounter with parents, and parents deserve the same respect in return. As a District, we choose not to be detoured from our core mission, vision, values and goals. We ask that parents seek to resolve problems that may arise in ways that encourage productive outcomes and a healthy staff work environment.

Much effort is taken to recruit the best teachers and administrators. We ask that parents understand and help us uphold a positive work environment so that retention of quality staff is achieved. Teachers thrive when given the opportunity to work in harmony with parents; negative behaviors that tear down their reputation will not be tolerated. Parents who choose to engage in harassing, intimidating and/or aggressive behaviors may be subject to being banned from school property and restricted in their future interactions with staff.

In situations when conflict cannot be immediately resolved, the below steps must be followed.

Enforcement Steps to Address Unresolved Conflict, Negative Interactions, & Harassing, Intimidating or Aggressive Behavior

The Butler 53 Administration will employ responsive measures should parents choose to disregard the Effective Parent Communications Norms. Such measures may include, but are not limited to the following:

1. A meeting will be held with the administration to review communication expectations.
2. The administration will send a letter or email to the parent formally documenting the concerns and explaining the necessary restriction steps to be taken if negative communications continue.
3. A parent may be removed from a leadership role in the district (room parent, committee participant, PTO position) if the negative communications persist.
4. Parents may be restricted from access to school activities, the facility, or barred from school grounds for up to one calendar year following disparaging and/or derogatory statements about faculty or staff.

Annual Commitment Process

The Butler 53 Board of Education, PTO, Administration, and the Oak Brook Education Association will annually review, acknowledge and agree to Parent Conduct Norms at the beginning of the school year, and will continue to implement them throughout the year. Parents will sign an acknowledgement statement annually to designate willingness to accept and comply with the Code of Conduct Norms. The Code of Conduct Norms will also be included in the Parent - Student Handbook each school year. A parent's failure to accept and comply with the Code of Conduct Norms does not restrict or prevent the District's ability to take responsive action if the parent engages in such behaviors or misconduct.

In District 53's Instructional Blueprint, the parents and teachers agree to child-centered practices, including:

- *Effectively engage with the school community through trust-based collaboration.*
- *Communicate the needs of their children to the school.*
- *Encourage a well-balanced children.*
- *Celebrate children's unique gifts and talents.*
- *Support student academic achievement by sending students to school ready to learn.*
- *Partner together to monitor student academic growth.*