



FREE BUILD THE ENGINE RESOURCE

Family Communication Toolkit

Templates for beginning-of-year messages, attendance, celebrations, and concerns

Purpose

Use this toolkit to help families hear the same leadership message: we know your child, we are paying attention, and we want to partner before small concerns become larger patterns.

The Build the Engine Family Communication Cycle

Step	Leader Move	Why It Matters
1. Set the tone	Communicate expectations, care, and partnership early.	Families trust schools that are clear before there is a concern.
2. Notice quickly	Reach out when attendance, behavior, academics, or engagement begins to shift.	Early contact prevents patterns from becoming habits.
3. Be specific	Name the evidence and the next step without blame.	Specific messages feel fair and actionable.
4. Celebrate progress	Contact families when students improve or show leadership.	Celebration builds trust and makes later problem-solving easier.
5. Close the loop	Follow up after a concern to share progress or next steps.	Families need to know the school is monitoring and supporting.

Tone rule

Warm does not mean vague. Strong family communication is caring, clear, specific, and action-oriented.

Message Planning Guide

Before sending a message, decide what families need to understand, feel, and do.

Communication Need	Best Channel	What to Include	Avoid
Beginning of year	Letter, email, call, school app	Welcome, vision, routines, how to contact the school, what partnership looks like.	Too many policies with no warmth.
Attendance	Call first, then written follow-up	Dates missed or tardy pattern, why attendance matters, support question, next step.	Blame, threats, or vague warnings.
Celebration	Call, postcard, text, email	Specific student action, impact, encouragement to keep going.	Generic praise with no detail.
Concern	Call for sensitive concerns, written summary after	Evidence, impact, support plan, requested family partnership, follow-up date.	Labels, assumptions, or surprises.
Close the loop	Call, text, email	Progress since last contact, remaining need, next checkpoint.	Only contacting when something is wrong.

Quick Message Formula

Part	Sentence Stem
Connect	I am reaching out because we care about [student] and want to partner early.
Name evidence	We noticed [specific evidence, date, pattern, or student action].
Explain impact	This matters because [connection to learning, belonging, safety, attendance, or confidence].
Invite partnership	Can you help us by [specific family action or conversation]?
Set next step	We will [school action] and follow up by [date].

Beginning-of-Year Message Templates

Template 1: Principal Welcome Message

Purpose: Set a warm, clear tone for the school year.

Use when: Use during the first week of school or before families arrive for orientation.

Dear Families,

Welcome to a new school year at [School Name]. We are excited to partner with you as we help every student feel known, safe, challenged, and supported. This year, our focus is [school priority]. You will hear us talk about this often because it will guide how we teach, communicate, and support students.

You can expect clear communication from our team, consistent routines for students, and early outreach when we need to celebrate progress or solve a concern together. If you have a question, please contact [contact person / method].

We are grateful to serve your family and excited for the year ahead.

With appreciation,
[Principal Name]

Template 2: Classroom or Grade-Level Partnership Message

Purpose: Help families understand what strong partnership looks like.

Use when: Use after schedules are set or when teachers begin regular family communication.

Hello [Grade/Class] Families,

This year, we want every student to build strong habits in attendance, effort, behavior, and learning. Families can help by checking [folder/app/platform], asking students what they learned each day, and contacting us early if something feels unclear.

Our team will reach out with celebrations, reminders, and concerns because we believe communication should happen before problems grow. Thank you for partnering with us.

[Teacher/Team Name]

Attendance and Engagement Templates

Template 3: Early Attendance Check-In

Purpose: Address a pattern before it becomes chronic.

Use when: Use after the first signs of an attendance or tardy pattern.

Hello [Family Name],

I am reaching out because we noticed [student] has missed [number] days / arrived late [number] times since [date]. We care about [student] and want to make sure there is not a barrier we can help with.

Attendance matters because every day gives students access to instruction, relationships, routines, and support. Is there anything making arrival or attendance difficult right now?

Our next step will be [school action]. We will check back by [date]. Thank you for partnering with us.

[Name]

Template 4: Re-Engagement After Absence

Purpose: Welcome the student back and reduce shame.

Use when: Use when a student returns after absences and needs a supportive reset.

Hi [Family Name],

We were glad to see [student] back at school today. We helped [him/her/them] with [specific support: missed assignment, schedule, check-in, lunch connection].

To help [student] feel caught up, please have [him/her/them] [specific action] tonight. We will also [school action] tomorrow.

Thank you for helping us keep [student] connected.

[Name]

Celebration and Concern Templates

Template 5: Specific Celebration Message

Purpose: Build trust by naming what the student did well.

Use when: Use weekly to build positive communication habits across classrooms and leadership teams.

Hello [Family Name],

I wanted to share a celebration about [student]. Today, [student] [specific action]. This stood out because [impact on learning, classmates, leadership, confidence, or effort].

Please celebrate this at home. We are proud of the progress [student] is making and want [him/her/them] to keep building on it.

[Name]

Template 6: Concern With Support Plan

Purpose: Communicate a concern without blame and name the next step.

Use when: Use when there is an academic, behavior, engagement, or routine concern that needs family partnership.

Hello [Family Name],

I am reaching out because we noticed [specific evidence]. This is important because [impact on learning, safety, belonging, or progress].

We want to partner early. At school, we will [specific school support]. At home, it would help if you could [specific family action or conversation].

We will monitor this and follow up by [date]. Please let us know if there is anything we should understand or any support your family needs.

[Name]

Filled-Out Examples

Use these examples to show staff the level of specificity families deserve.

Situation	Filled-Out Message
Attendance	Hello Ms. Thomas, I am reaching out because Jayden has arrived late 4 times since Sept. 3. We care about Jayden and want to make sure there is not a barrier we can help with. Arrival matters because morning math begins at 8:15, and he has missed the lesson launch several times. Is there anything making morning arrival difficult right now? Our counselor will call tomorrow to check in, and we will review attendance again next Friday.
Celebration	Hello Mr. Lee, I wanted to share a celebration about Amira. Today she explained her math strategy to her group and helped another student correct an error. This stood out because she used academic language and showed leadership. Please celebrate this at home. We are proud of the confidence she is building.
Concern	Hello Mrs. Garcia, I am reaching out because Sofia completed 2 of 8 independent practice problems today and put her head down for several minutes. This matters because she understands the skill when supported, but she is not yet completing enough practice independently. Tomorrow, her teacher will check in before independent work and break the task into two parts. At home, it would help if you ask her what strategy she will try when work feels difficult. We will follow up on Friday.

Family Communication Tracker

Student / Family	Reason	Date	Channel	Next Step / Follow-Up

Want the deeper system?

This free toolkit gives leaders ready-to-use family communication templates. Build the Engine consulting, coaching, and step-by-step guides help schools build the full communication system: routines, scripts, trackers, staff expectations, family partnership plans, and accountability checkpoints.

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