

## Building Block: Communication

### Passing Notes: In and Out of School

“Community” and “communication” are formed from the same root word. “To be in close rapport” describes the heart of both. Members of a school community look for different ways to build relationship for the benefit of their children. Embracing opportunities to communicate with one another leads to mutual understanding and shared responsibility in education. Passing notes from school to home and home to school simply links the two environments most basic in a child’s life. Agendas or assignment notebooks that travel to and from school and home each day have become embedded in the practices of most schools. Each day, that written communication can take place in brief and timely words from the teacher and from the family.



Families recognize the importance of sending written communication to teachers. Intentional and systemic practice to encourage communication from home to school can be encouraged with Happy-Grams. Distributing specially printed pads of Happy-Grams to parents or attaching blank forms to the school newsletter provides a simple means (and reminder) to parents. Teachers appreciate notes of kindness—“My son Brian really enjoyed the recent unit in science on the solar system. We checked-out new books from the library on the subject.”

Today’s technology provides another means to pass notes between home and school. While not all school community members may have 100 percent access or use of school and classroom websites, this too offers a valuable means to have meaningful exchanges.

Parents are most interested in specific information about their own child, and are very appreciative of personalized notes. These help to strengthen the collaborative relationship between parent, teacher and student.

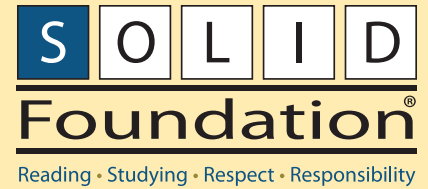
Teachers find the time to take a proactive role in communicating with parents. Notes to home might include a welcome letter prior to the new school year; contact that includes personal and positive comments; timely information about classroom activities and events as well as to share information regarding each student’s academic or social progress.

### Solid Foundation Team:

Cole Manor Elementary School, Norristown Area School District  
Team Leader: Nicole Poncheri, Principal  
nponcheri@nasd.k12.pa.us • Phone: (610) 275-5525 or (610) 592-4850

### Parent Education Workshops

Cole Manor Elementary School recognizes that activities that increase parent involvement are a key factor in the success of their school. At the beginning of the school year, parents are notified about monthly workshops designed especially for them to better understand how to help their child thrive at school. Topics range from “Homework and Beyond” to “Storytelling for ELL Students” to “PSSA Information and Preparation” and more. These workshops are facilitated by school staff, PA PIRC staff and outside community leaders. The times of the workshops differ each month to try to reach as many parents as possible. Parents are reminded numerous times about the workshops to encourage greater participation.



**Solid Foundation is a school-based team process that helps:**

- Strengthen family-school connections
- Engage parents in their children’s learning
- Improve student, academic and social learning



Check out Section 4, pages 45-56 of your Solid Foundation Resource manual and in the Additional Resources – Community Building Ideas.

### NEED HELP?

Contact:  
**Caroline Allen**  
Education Partnership Coordinator  
callen@csc.csiu.org

**Kathy Kurpeikis**  
Education Specialist  
kkurpeikis@adi.org

**Karen Shanoski**  
Family-School-Community Partnerships Project Manager  
kshanoski@csc.csiu.org

**More information can be found at:**  
[www.center-school.org/pa-pirc](http://www.center-school.org/pa-pirc)  
[www.adi.org/solidfoundation](http://www.adi.org/solidfoundation)  
[www.Families-Schools.org](http://www.Families-Schools.org)



PA PIRC is housed at the Center for Schools and Communities  
275 Grandview Avenue, Suite 200  
Camp Hill, PA 17011  
(717) 763-1661  
[www.center-school.org/pa-pirc](http://www.center-school.org/pa-pirc)