

The Home-School Connection

The ASD Nest team works collaboratively with Nest parents, maintaining a professional and open line of communication. A consistent structure for communication is an important two-way communication tool between Nest parents and teachers/therapists in the ASD Nest program. Nest teachers and therapists also meet regularly with parents. The social workers at each Nest school acts as an additional support and facilitates collaboration between the Nest families and their school teams.

A consistent and open line of communication is maintained between home and school through written communications and individual and group parent meetings.

Positive home-school communication:

The purpose of the a home-school communication structure is to maintain ongoing collaboration between a student's school and his/her family. Using this structure allows Nest professionals to:

- Create new and positive relationship with parents
- Record successes and highlights, upcoming events/activities, or concerns
- Share successful strategies or tools from school to use at home
- Ask/answer questions and gain insight into parents' concerns

Digital communication:

It is often most convenient to communicate via email. However, the ASD Nest program does not require that parents use email. For families who do not use email, staff use a notebook that travels between home and school. When using an email structure, Nest professionals adhere to the following:

- ASD Nest team members working with the student are copied on general email communication to ensure that everyone is on the same page. Sensitive material is not shared or discussed through email, and, instead, a phone or face-to-face conference is scheduled.
- All emails are printed and hard copies are saved in a folder/binder so that communication is accessible to the student's ASD Nest team while also maintaining confidentiality.
- Professionals in the ASD Nest program do not text/instant message with parents. If parents request this form of communication, Nest professionals clarify that the notebook or email is used for communication. Professionals are also advised to call students' homes from school phones rather than cell phones.

Meeting with parents:

In addition to the IEP conference and report card meetings, the ASD Nest team can schedule additional meetings with families. Some helpful guidelines:

- Nest school social workers / guidance counselors can be a point person for home-school contact. If schools have an advisory system, a students' advisor may be a primary contact.
- Student drop-off and pick-up times are not ideal times to catch up with parents or to schedule meetings.
- When scheduling meetings, consider which ASD Nest team members should be present.
- Dates of all meetings and calls, as well as topics discussed, should be recorded.
- Parent concerns and suggestions are shared at the student's case conferences following the parent meeting.

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Additional Questions & Considerations:

How often do Nest teachers communicate with parents?

Communication with parents takes place at least once or twice per week. Parents are informed how often and when they can expect communication, as determined by the principal or team (e.g., twice a week in 6th & 7th grade, once a week in 8th grade), and communication remains consistent throughout the year. Grade-level teams establish routines for ongoing communication to ensure parents hear from teachers across the team. An example routine is included below:

	Student A		Student B		Student C		Student D		Student E		Student F		Student G		Student H	
Wk 11/18	ELA	Math	Sci	SS												
Wk 11/25	Sci	SS	ELA	Math												
Wk 12/2	ELA	Math	Sci	SS												
Wk 12/9	Sci	SS	ELA	Math												

How often do Nest teachers read and respond to parent emails?

Parents need to feel confident that their emails will be read on the day that they are received, and that they will receive a response according to the established schedule (unless the matter is time-sensitive). At a minimum, Nest teachers are responsible to indicate that they read the note, responding, "Thank you for your email. I will get back to you on (date)," and then respond in a timely fashion on the set schedule.

How can Nest teams ensure all team members are included on emails?

There are several ways to create a grade-wide email system. One method is to CC the student's entire team on each correspondence and ask parents to reply-all. Another method that may reduce an influx of irrelevant emails is to create a grade-wide email address (e.g., *8thgradeMS206@gmail.com*). All Nest teachers on the grade can have access to this account and simply sign their own name at the bottom of emails they send so parents know who has written.

In what kind of tone are communications written?

Communication with parents is positive. Difficulties that a student is having are shared, but a positive tone is set, reassuring families that the issues are being addressed, and established through sharing initial and ongoing successes.

What is done when parent concerns extend beyond what a Nest teacher or therapist can address?

Parent concerns can always be passed along to the school's Nest social worker or guidance counselor. The ASD Nest team can also pass on parent concerns to the administration.

A note on the ASD Nest Model:

This paper outlines an element of the ASD Nest Model. Fidelity of implementation to the model is essential for program consistency. While a degree of flexibility is necessary given individual school needs, the program benefits from schools' commitment to a cohesive model.