

The Home-School Connection

The ASD Nest team works collaboratively with Nest parents, maintaining a professional and open line of communication. The home-school notebook 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.

The home-school communication notebook:

The purpose of the notebook is to maintain ongoing collaboration between home and school. Through thoughtful use of the notebook, Nest professionals can:

- 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:

If parents ask for digital communication rather than the notebook, schools may accommodate this request, although the ASD Nest program does not require that parents use email. For families who do request the use of email in lieu of the notebook, 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 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.
- Beyond kindergarten, 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 child's case conferences following the parent meeting.

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Additional Questions & Considerations:

How often do Nest teachers write in the home-school communication notebook?

Routines are established for ongoing communication with parents (e.g., Nest teachers may write in half of the home-school communication notebooks every Tuesday and the other half of the notebooks every Thursday, unless something timely comes up). Parents know how often/when they can expect notes (e.g., twice a week in kindergarten and once a week in 3rd grade) and communication remains consistent throughout the year.

How often do Nest teachers read the notebook?

Parents need to feel confident that their notes 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, teachers are responsible to indicate that they read the note, writing, "Thank you for your note. I will get back to you on (date)," and then respond in a timely fashion on the set schedule.

Where are the home-school communication notebooks kept in the Nest classrooms?

Nest teachers establish one designated location for the home-school communication notebooks that is accessible to the ASD Nest team and remains consistent all year. Students know where to turn-in and pick-up their notebooks every day. All email communications with parents are printed out and filed in a binder, which is kept where all ASD Nest team members have access to it, while still maintaining student confidentiality.

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.