

Section:	Students and Instruction
Title:	Communication Books

Purpose

To provide students with diverse and complex needs and/or disabilities, regular home-school communication as an important factor for success and safety.

General Guidelines:

1. Setting up a system between the home and school team with consideration to format, information to be included, both from school and home, as well as time constraints of all involved, is required. Often, the student agenda is used for the purpose of ongoing communication.
2. As students develop their skills and sense of responsibility, it may be good practice to begin to involve them in the process of this communication. In some cases, due to the nature of the student's disability or their age and readiness, the student cannot do this for themselves. Some students are not able to tell their parents about their day; thus, the agenda may act as their voice.
3. When the communication required is beyond what can be written in a student's agenda, or content that is better communicated between the adults, then setting up an alternate communication may be necessary. For instance, when the communication is to provide documentation about specific programming for health, personal or confidential matters, or behavioural matters, a home-school communication book may work best. A simple notebook labelled 'Communication Book' is very effective.
4. Some children have serious health issues, such as seizures, about which a Nursing Support Services Care Plan may also be in place at school. Parents will need information about serious health issues daily, and the parameters for reporting will be clearly outlined. Collaboration between the parent and school is essential for safety. Communication books do not replace Nursing Support (NSS) plan, care plans or safety plans.
5. This communication book is then sent home daily in the child's backpack. Initialling by the teacher or the EA helps let the parents know their communication has been received, even though the staff may not always have time to reply in writing.
6. This procedure is for all staff interacting with and storing confidential, personal, and sensitive information about a student. Thoughtful steps are necessary to ensure students' personal information is secure. Personal information refers to recorded information about an identifiable individual.

Procedure:

1. Parents support the communication of information between home and school. Include information that may influence the student's ability to participate or stay engaged in the learning environment. (For instance, if the student had a difficult morning, lack of sleep, a change in medication, or had a seizure).
2. Staff support the communication of information between school and home. (For instance, information about daily activities, challenges and/or successes, information that may need to be debriefed at home).
3. Adults share information about pre-determined and specific issues where everyone is in agreement about the purpose and content of the information to be shared. Where appropriate, students may share information with adult input.

4. The information shared is clear and concise, so parents or staff don't find it onerous to read. Time should be considered so that staff members are logistically able to participate.
5. Ensure privacy considerations and safeguard confidentiality. Label the communication book 'private and confidential' and ensure only those who are on the school support team have access to reading and writing in the book. Consider how it will be passed to the parent each day. Consider if the communication book fell out of a backpack, would the privacy and dignity of the child, parent or staff member be maintained?
6. Educational Assistants work closely with students, and it is often appropriate for them to share information in the communication book. All communication should be monitored by the classroom teacher. For all communication books, BCTF and CUPE have jointly determined that it is the classroom teacher who is responsible for reporting to parents both formally and informally.
7. Both families and school staff need to be sensitive to how messages may be perceived. The use of capitals, pen pressure, ink colour, large script and language can convey aggression. The communication book is not the place for difficult conversations. Difficult conversations are best done in person.
8. If there is a situation that is serious or particularly difficult, a phone call may be necessary to avoid a misinterpretation.

Date Adopted: July 2022 (Previously, AP 4.1.4)

Date Amended: July 2025

Cross Reference: