



Fact Sheet

Communication between Family and School: Creating a Communication Notebook that Works

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A communication notebook or daily journal is a book that goes back and forth from home to school, and the idea has been around for a while. It seems to be something commonly used in special education.

It is important for parents to know what is happening with their children during the school day—regardless of whether or not their children have disabilities. Home-to-school and school-to-home communication is one of the most important and necessary factors in developing good relationships between classroom teams and families. Due to busy work schedules, lack of time, and transportation challenges, the opportunities to meet in person are limited.

Teachers and school teams benefit when parents share information about medical issues that may affect the student's behavior at school. It can be beneficial to the family and school team when they share ideas and successes with communication skills as well as other skills. Perhaps it is worthwhile to take a look at how we might better use this notebook tool with our students who are deafblind.

Educators and parents may see a picture in their minds of a beleaguered teacher at the end of the school day with a stack of notebooks that need to be written in. One possible solution for the team of the student who is deafblind may be if the student has a one-on-one aide or intervener; it may be useful to have that person writing in the communication book. The intervener/one-on-one will probably have spent most of the day with the student and be more attuned to what has happened at school. Also they will be aware of the communication system the student is using and the different therapies that (s)he participated in that day. The teacher may then be free to write about special things that have happened, or concerns about the student. Also the student's related service providers such as Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Orientation and Mobility, Speech Language Therapist, and other special education personnel may find time to write on occasion and send messages home through the person writing in the notebook.

If the student has a home program it may be good to have the home staff write something in the communication book from time to time. Sharing ideas and strategies can be helpful to both the home and school teams.

Some teams may like to write long narratives but others may find that too time consuming. It may be that the persons involved devise some type of template that is easy to fill out and still will provide important information. Most important is that the home school notebook is effective and it meets the needs of the child, team, and family; that it is used regularly; and is simple, honest, and positive, as well as understandable for all.

When writing in a communication notebook there are things we might want to consider:

- Something the student did for the first time at home or school, or something the student is beginning to do on a more regular basis, whether or not we see this as positive or negative.
- Something the student may be anxious or excited about in his or her life.
- Something that occurred physically—illness, bowel movement, menstrual period, changes in medications, etc.
- What is going on at home—visitors, activities, work schedules, home staff. This is especially important if something unexpected has occurred in the home and/or with a family member that may affect the student.
- How much sleep the student has gotten.
- What the student has eaten or drunk and how that seems to affect him or her. It is helpful to note new experiences with food that will help the people surrounding the student to know more about his likes or dislikes.
- Who the student interacted with socially, and how (s)he seemed to feel about that—interaction with friends, classmates, family.
- Who are the student's buddies—what activities do they share?
- Who the student has interacted with to work/learn, and how the student felt about that—staff, therapist.
- Physical and communication patterns during the day/week that may show how the student is feeling.
- What is happening on the bus.
- What happened today that was not so positive?
- **Very Important:** What happened today that was positive!!!

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