

Classroom Updates via Email

Context

Students benefit from having invested, informed families that are connected to their learning. One way to inform and engage families is by sending home regular classroom updates. These updates can share information about learning, remind about school policies, and elicit responses from families.

Goals for Classroom Updates

- Inform families of classroom projects, events, and curriculum;
- Extend student learning; and
- Build relationship with families.

General Guidelines for Effective Classroom Updates

- ✓ **Concise:** Information should be easily understood and shared. Use formatting and words that makes for an easy reading experience.
- ✓ **Consistent:** Find a regular time of day/week/month that works best for you to send correspondence home to families. Make it a reasonable amount: you don't want to wear out yourself or your families!
- ✓ **Valuable:** Provide insights into the school day and student learning that families might not get elsewhere. You have a knowledgeable lens about what is going on- share it!

Possible Topics for Classroom Update:

- Highlight upcoming important dates
- Write a narrative about what students are learning
- Provide reminders about class or school procedures/expectations
- Share about new class or school initiatives
- Elicit parent support with classroom jobs
- Share specific language families can use to talk about the school day

About Access to Email

- Identify early on if there are families who do not have regular access to email. As needed, print out the email updates and send them home in the student's folder/backpack.
 - Post a printed copy of the email updates on the outside of your classroom door. This can provide an easy reference for both you and your families!
-



Created by Jere Lorenzen-Strait

School Leaders: How can you help?

Support teachers to create classroom updates by:

- Providing dedicated time to compose classroom updates;
- Reading teacher classroom updates so you can be informed about the learning in that community; and
- Working with classroom teachers to identify any families that may not have access to email.



Sample Beginning-Of-Year Email

Hi Families,

Today was an enjoyable first day back! I am so happy to welcome the new additions to our community and to see the familiar, smiling faces I missed so much this summer! I'm also happy to report that your kids are still kind, helpful, clever, and funny. :o)

Some of the things they did today:

- Had their first **Morning Meeting**, including a greeting to learn/remember each others' names and a movement activity called "As If!"
- Took a **tour of the school** building and **met some of the teachers** and staff around the school.
- Explored the **nature area** and sandbox in the front of the school and had **snack** outside in the shade.
- Had a guided discovery of **Table Toys, pens, color pencil/crayon caddies, and journaling**.
- Wrote about what "**Summer is ...**" to them.
- Listened to **stories** while resting on their mats.
- Had their first **Community Meeting**, where kids shared appreciations, requests, and favorite memories from the day

Some questions you can ask your child about their first day of school:

- Who was first? Who was the door holder?
- What greeting did you do today? Who did you greet?
- What center did you open today? What did you play with there?
- What stories did [teacher] read today?
- What did you play in the Nature Area? Who did you play with?
- Did you learn any new songs today?
- What do you hope to do tomorrow?

Here are some important notes for the start of the year:

General Notes:

- I will begin to send your child's folder home each day, starting tomorrow. Please check the folder each night.
- Any medical/proof-of-residence forms given to me were turned into [admin] in the main office. If you still have more forms to turn-in you can give them to [admin] or send them to school in your child's folder.
- Our morning line-up location is in the cafeteria just below the sign marked with my name.
- Our after school pick-up location is in the front nature area next to the third tree.
- If you haven't submitted your field trip/supply fee, please do so this week or contact me to make alternate arrangements. I will begin to put deposits down for busses and entrance fees.

Clothing:

- Please, send your child to school wearing clothes appropriate for the weather. We will be outside playing every day!
 - Please send your child to school wearing clothes and footwear that can get dirty. Everyday we will be out in the nature area, playing in the sand, grass, and dirt.
 - Please make sure your child has a set of extra clothing at school, especially underwear and socks.
-



Created by Jere Lorenzen-Strait

Parent Volunteer Opportunities: Here are a number of parent volunteer opportunities. I'll also send out dates and times to volunteer in the classroom after the first six weeks of school. Please let me know if you are interested in any of the following:

- **Room Parent:** Help organize classroom events and support communication about classroom/school-wide initiatives.
- **Parent Leads for:** Thanksgiving Potluck, Winter Solstice Week, Auction Project, and Kindergarten Closing. As Parent Lead, you'll work with [teacher] and Room Parent to organize your specific event/project.
- **Communication Liaison:** Help disseminate and collect information for class/school-wide initiatives.
- **Classroom Volunteers:** Share your passions with Room [#]! Read a book, play an instrument, cook some food ... how would you like to be connected to our class?
- **Kerchief Sewer:** Help update our field trip kerchiefs to reflect our new school information by sewing on new labels.

Thanks again for attending the Kindergarten Meeting on Monday. There was a lot of new information coming your way. I appreciate all of your comments, questions, and concerns. I shared the concerns raised about the drop-off procedures with [principal]. More information should come out soon in response to your concerns.

Also, attached are the Snack Schedule for the school year and some snack guidelines.

Have a great evening,

[teacher]

Sample Middle-Of-Year Email

Hi Families,

I hope this message finds you well. All is well in Room [#]!

Here's what we've been up to:

- I've been working one-on-one with the kids on a symbol project. They have made representational drawings of their symbols, selected fabrics and thread, sewed their symbol to their fabric, and made decisions about additional color/art materials to accentuate important elements of their symbol. I am especially fond of the individual thread lines that illustrate each child's craft and approach to sewing. The lines of thread, paired with the drawings, tell a story of persistence and care. Some prompts or questions to ask your child:
 - What does your symbol mean? Why did you choose it?
 - Can you explain how you learned to sew?
 - What other materials did you use? Why did you choose those?
- For the last several weeks we have been enjoying an author study of Margaret Wise Brown. She uses such rich language and the kids have taken a keen interest in her stories. Our current favorites so far are: *The Fur Family*, *The Diggers*, *Color Kittens*, and, *Sailor Dog*. Many of the kids are still working on identifying the role of the author and illustrator, so it has been helpful to read many books by the same author with many different illustrators. When reading with your kids at night, ask:
 - Who is the author? What does she do?
 - Who is the illustrator? What does she do?
 - Can you tell me what happened in this story?
 - What was your favorite part? Why?
- The kids have the opportunity to write and express their ideas every day. They typically write in their journals in response to a story or a question. Each journal entry includes: name, picture, writing about the picture (I ask kids to "write it your way" using letters/words/sounds they know), and color. A few weeks ago I introduced the Handwriting Without Tears: "My First School Book." In the school books the kids have been practicing
 - Line making
 - Using a "helper hand" (non-writing hand to hold paper steady)
 - Careful coloring with hand "kissing" the page
 - Proper grip.

We are focusing on colors and shapes. I taught the kids a simple song to help them with their writing grip. Try practicing at home:

*Pick up a crayon, Pick up a crayon, This is easy to do
Pick up a crayon, Pick up a crayon, I just tell my fingers what to do
My thumb is bent, Pointer points to the tip, Tall Man uses his side
I tuck my last two fingers in and take them for a ride
Now I'm holding it just right, But not too tight, Every finger knows what to do
And now I have a big surprise, A big surprise for you
Let's drop it and do it again!*

A few notes:

FoodPrints Help Needed: We have one chaperone spot available for our Food Prints day at school tomorrow. Let me know if you'd like to join us!

Winter Solstice: Last week I sent home information about our Winter Solstice Celebration on Friday, December 19th. We'll wear PJs to school and make breakfast for lunch! Please send your \$7



Created by Jere Lorenzen-Strait

contribution by Friday so that I can purchase all food/supplies over the weekend. The solstice info form is attached. I'm also looking for help with the following:

- We would love to have parents visit the class to share family holiday traditions. We can trim a Christmas tree, weave mkekas for Kwanzaa, or learn how to play the dreidel game. These or other traditions would be great! Let me know if you're interested. Ideally, we could have a different tradition each day at 11 AM.
- We need 2 electric griddles and a 2 crock pots to use on 12/19/14. Let me know if you can lend us your gear!

Weather-Appropriate Clothing/Shoes: Just a friendly reminder that we go outside every day to play, rain (or snow) or shine. Please make sure your child has on appropriate shoes for jumping in puddles and running in the rain. Make sure they are wearing a warm coat, gloves/mittens, and a hat. Fresh air and free play does us all a heap of good, so I appreciate your support with this. ☺

Student Folders: As you have surely noticed we have new folders. While I liked the functionality of the last set, they were breaking apart in too-small backpacks. Please ensure that your child has a backpack that can hold their folder (without bending in half ... or fourths!). Also, please check your child's folder each night and remove any papers you find there.

As always, if you have any questions, please reach out!

Many thanks,
[teacher]



Created by Jere Lorenzen-Strait

Sample End-Of-Year Email

Hello Wonderful Families!

I hope this message finds you well. Room [#] continues to be a pleasant and peaceful place. :o)

Here's what we've been up to:

- Sew-a-Palooza has come to a close. For the last few weeks, we have been working non-stop to sew our Heritage Island Map. As of last Friday, the map is done! Check it out on your way to and from school. Take note of the legend at the bottom of the map, as well as the accompanying island guide to the left. This map is a great example of the possibilities when we work together as a class. The kids persisted when the fabric got tough, they figured out how to sew on those darn skinny wish wands, and they endured a few pricks from the needles. The end result is a beautiful, accurate map of Heritage Island. Stay tuned for an exciting challenge for your family ... the Bluebird Challenge! Some questions to ask your kids:
 - What is a legend? How is it used?
 - Which parts did you help to create?
 - What was your favorite part of this project? Why?
 - Tell me about Heritage Island.
- Our literacy centers are going swimmingly. The kids have adapted well to the fast-paced routines. We are talking a lot about letters, letter sounds, sounds in words/names, and proper ways to make uppercase letters. During our literacy centers the kids continue to make letters with playdough, chalk, magnets, sand, and crayons, and they search and cut out letters for our writing center.
- We've been enjoying an extra 20+ minutes of outside play time in the Nature Are after lunch each day. The kids are really enjoying the new play elements in that space: the sandbox, house, stage, logs, and the bridge.
- [assistant teacher] recently finished working with kids on making Number Books. The kids got lots of practice writing numbers and counting objects. Documentation about the number books is going up in the classroom this week - come on in and take a look! Some ways to support this at home:
 - Ask your child to count the shoes in their room
 - Look for numbers in the environment. Ask your child what the number is and what it means.
 - Have your child help with the grocery list by writing the number of items
- The kids have been dictating their original stories to me for our next sewing project: making sewn story maps! We've been talking a lot about characters, problems in stories, and the setting of books. The kids will capture the important elements of their stories in sewn tapestries. Fabric donations are still welcome.

A few notes:

Family Math Game Night Tomorrow: Join us for our first annual Family Math Game Night from 6:00-7:30 PM tomorrow night. RSVP if you plan to buy pizza slices at school, or just head on over after dinner. Parents and kids can move around the school to play math games including: Choice Time Math Games, War and Other Games, and make your own Pattern Bracelets.

Children Are Citizens Event on 4/25/15: Coming up on April 25th, 10 AM - 1 PM is the Children Are Citizens Project celebration at the National Gallery of Art. The project involved the PK3-1st grade classes



Created by Jere Lorenzen-Strait

at our school in partnership with [DCPS school], the National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center, and Washington International School. At the celebration our kids' work will be showcased and each child will receive a copy of the collaborative book about this project.

FoodPrints on 4/7: Our FoodPrints day switched to next Tuesday, 4/7. Let me know if you are available to assist from 8:30-12:30. If you've never experienced a FoodPrints day, you've been missing out. Join us!

As always, please reach out with any questions!
Sleep tight,
[teacher]

