

Riverview Netiquette

While the guidelines below focus on parent and teacher communication, the principles apply to all Riverview stakeholders.

Guidelines for Parent & Teacher E-Mail Communication

Riverview is very fortunate to have two direct ways for parents and teachers to communicate: phones and e-mail. Phones (and voice mail) in every classroom create a safer environment as well as offering an easier, more convenient way for parents to communicate with teachers. E-mail has also enriched communication opportunities between teachers and parents.

There are both benefits and drawbacks to these improvements in technology. In some ways, the new technology has added to everyone's workload and led to an expectation for a turn-around response time that might not be possible. The guidelines for what is effective and appropriate in terms of e-mail communication need to be clarified.

Teacher Realities

- The classroom environment does not allow teachers to check their e-mails regularly. In a best case scenario, they check and respond to e-mails before and after school.
- Response time can be further delayed by teachers being unavailable due to illness, training sessions, meetings, workshops, and conferences before and after school.
- Teachers devote extra time learning new curriculum, standards, and assessments and then preparing for classroom instruction.

Issues to Consider Before E-Mailing a Teacher

- **Timing:** Remember the classroom environment and the complexity of each teacher's day. If you don't get an answer the same day, it doesn't mean you're being ignored.
- **Purpose of Communication:** Think about your goal in communicating with the teacher. If the goal is to merely share a piece of information or give the teacher some lead time to think about an issue you'd like to discuss, an e-mail is probably appropriate. If the goal, however, is to have two-way communication and meaningful dialogue, e-mail is not appropriate. The telephone or a face-to-face meeting is a better option.
- **Sheer Volume:** Each elementary teacher has at least 24 students. Secondary teachers have up to 180 students. Think about the volume of e-mails this many parents could generate.

Please Keep in Mind

- Teachers are interested in communicating with parents. Teachers want to know if a student is experiencing difficulty at home or at school.
- Communication, although important, needs to be controlled. Responding to e-mails takes time and thought.
- E-mails leave a lot of room for misunderstanding.

E-Mail Etiquette Tips for Parents and Teachers

These guidelines can help parents use e-mail in ways that will be most beneficial to the student. They are equally useful for teachers too.

1. Never use e-mail for matters of controversy or real distress. When you have a really serious matter, it is always best to meet with the teacher directly.
2. Do not send multiple e-mails on the same topic. Generally, teachers will try to get back to you as quickly as they can. Remember, they have many students and are concerned about all of them.
3. Never say anything by e-mail that you wouldn't want published.
4. The rules for civility in e-mail are the same as in face-to-face meetings. Convey a positive tone in your e-mails which can set the stage for a cordial working relationship with teachers and other school personnel.

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