

# *John J. Ahern Middle School*

## *Communication Guide for Parents*

### **Foxborough Public Schools Core Values:**

- **C**hallenging and innovative educational experiences promote academic excellence by meeting the needs of students in ways that engage them in their learning.
- **A** safe, supportive, and collaborative environment fosters positive attitudes among students and school staff.
- **R**espect for the diversity and dignity of individuals and cultures enriches learning and supports the development of responsible citizenship.
- **E**nsuring a quality education, cultivated by ongoing communication and shared resources among parents, teachers, town organizations, and residents, is the responsibility of the entire community.

### **Mission statement:**

The mission of the Foxborough Public Schools, guided by its core values, is to engage students in a rich, diversified education, thereby empowering them to challenge themselves as they become productive, responsible citizens.

### **Vision:**

The Foxborough Public Schools, in collaboration with the community, will provide students with intellectual, artistic, and character building educational experiences to inspire them to achieve.

### **Purpose of the Communication Guide**

**C**ommunication is the key element in helping your student gain the most from his/her education. Ongoing communication and shared resources among parents and teachers is a core value of the Foxborough Public Schools, and we, as parents, teachers, and administrators, share the responsibility of modeling for our children the process of working together and of teaching the benefits of open and honest communication.

This guide does not replace the Student/Parent Handbook, which covers areas of necessary information and requires a careful reading, but it does give you as the parent/guardian an overview of avenues that can be helpful to you in communicating with the school.

It is the responsibility of the Ahern Middle School to provide the opportunities for your child to acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of mind needed to succeed and to act responsibly in a rapidly changing world. The faculty is also responsible for providing information about your child and his/her education, as well as sending home formal reports at periodic intervals.

It is your responsibility to talk to your child so that you can know when to ask questions. It is also your responsibility to keep informed through the school about your child's education. Together it is possible to assist our students in reaching their potential as responsible adults and successful learners.

## Facilitating Communication Between Home and School

### **Contacting the Right Person:**

There are several avenues for gaining information at the Ahern Middle School including the teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, AMS website, and general school publications.

Begin with the person closest to the issue. Questions and concerns revolving around a specific class can generally be answered by talking directly to the teacher. Communication with the teacher is welcomed and encouraged. Teachers are direct links to information about your child's academic progress. Early conversation via e-mail, note, or telephone can help to alleviate many concerns. In grades 5 and 6 teachers are responsible for about 48 students each, and in grades 7 and 8 the teachers are responsible for over 100 students each. Please keep this in mind when considering the appropriate avenue for communication. E-mail addresses, voice mail, and phone numbers are available on-line at [www.foxborough.k12.ma.us](http://www.foxborough.k12.ma.us). Or contact the main office at 508-543-1610 for direction.

If this does not prove satisfactory, you need to decide if your questions are curricular or administrative in order to take the next step.

If questions are curricular or involve course selection and placement, you should contact the guidance counselor.

**If issues are administrative in nature or deal with the broader issues of school policy, you should first contact one of the assistant principals. He/She can address your questions or can lead you to other adults in a position to help you. The Main Office staff is also helpful in directing your questions to the appropriate person. The Principal remains available at all times should you need further administrative help.**

If your question is regarding your student's overall educational program or his/her social and emotional growth, you can contact your child's guidance counselor or, when appropriate, his/her Special Education liaison.

### **Other Avenues of Communication**

#### **Conferences:**

One afternoon and one evening of parent teacher conferences are scheduled for November. Information explaining how to schedule these conferences will be sent to parents in the fall, prior to the conference days. Parents are given the option to meet with all of their child's teachers or select a few. Conferences enable you to receive a face-to-face evaluation of your child's progress and to discuss course requirements with the teacher. As these meetings are of short duration, if there are concerns that require more time, an additional meeting or phone conference can follow.

In addition to the formal scheduled conference meetings with teachers, a meeting may be initiated by the teacher or by the parent at any time. A parent conference may be initiated by the teacher if your student is having academic difficulty, or by the parent by calling or e-mailing the teacher to arrange a mutually convenient time.

In-person conferences may be substituted by telephone, email, and postal communication at any time. Please check with the individual teacher for convenient methods for both of you.

#### **Formal Reports:**

Report cards are sent home with the students at the end of quarters 1, 2, 3, and 4. The quarter dates are posted on the school calendar. They are sent home in envelopes requiring a

parent/guardian signature to ensure parent receipt. Ask your student to see their report cards. Also, PowerSchool parent access is daily information about your child's progress.

**Newsletter:**

The Ahern Middle School Newsletter is posted on the AMS webpage and also sent out via the AMS Mail List monthly. It contains a calendar of events, as well as articles on events at AMS and student achievements. It also contains a message from the Principal. The Newsletter is also available in print form if requested.

**Handbook:**

The Ahern Middle School Handbook is distributed to students at the beginning of each school year. It contains important information for parents and students.

**School Web Page:**

The Ahern Middle School web page has links to teacher, student, and Ahern community information. The AMS Internet homepage is <http://foxborough.k12.ma.us/fpsweb/AHER/AHERindex.html>.

Anyone who is interested in receiving more timely information about pertinent school related issues should sign up through the Foxborough website by clicking "AMS Mail List" on the main page of the Ahern website to join the list.

**Problem Solving**

Concerns and problems need to be solved as they arise in order to best serve all participants, especially the student. Encourage your child to speak to his/her teacher as soon as any problem surfaces. You are encouraged to follow up if your child is unclear about the teacher's response. If for any reason the teacher is unable to answer your questions, please call the appropriate persons as indicated above to resolve any issue.

**Parent/Teacher Communication:**

Call teachers immediately with concerns, questions, or just to check on progress. If you wonder about issues such as homework, test results, classroom expectations, or behavior, the teacher is the one who can answer you best. In most instances a brief phone call will lead to understanding and resolution. If necessary, meetings can be arranged with one or several teachers. Please be aware that each teacher is responsible for many students so that it is not always possible to be immediately available for a conversation or a meeting. However, if you leave a message they will return your call.

**Parent/Guidance Communication:**

The guidance counselor is an integral part of your child's school life. The assigned guidance counselor will be working with your child helping to promote both academic and personal growth. Each student is assigned to a guidance counselor.

**Parent/Administration Communication:**

All questions or issues relating to the larger community outside of the classroom and curriculum should be addressed to various members of the administration at Ahern Middle School.

If you are unsure of whom to contact regarding any issue, please call the Main Office and the staff can help direct your calls to the appropriate person.

Principal Susan Abrams is always available to you should you not be able to find satisfactory answers to your questions elsewhere.

Most policy questions can be answered by checking the *Student Handbook*, which is sent home at the beginning of each year. Certain policies, however, require parental input and are highlighted here:

**Attendance:**

Please check the Attendance section of the *Student Handbook* for full details.

Please call the Absentee Line if your son or daughter will not be in school, 508-543-1661 option 1, on the day of the absence.

Any call from the main office regarding an unexplained absence requires an immediate response! All absences are unexcused. A parent call informs the school that the parent is aware the student was not present in school. Parents should make every effort to immediately document all absences when doctor and dentist visits are required; or the child has a prolonged illness.

**Opportunities for Involvement**

Parental involvement in school remains valuable no matter the age of the student. Though middle school students begin to resist seeing their *own* parents in school, they enjoy seeing other parents! They are also proud of their parent's participation in helping others, even as they start to 'push back' when assistance is directed at them. As they get older, they truly need and value parental support through involvement in their school and activities, it just adjusts as students become the independent learners we are teaching them to be. The Ahern PAC has many school based opportunities for parent participation.

Current research at Harvard University demonstrates that it is especially important as students move from grades 5 through 8, from elementary to secondary, that parental involvement includes communication of realistic expectations for behavioral and academic achievement and assisting with learning strategies either personally or through contacting the appropriate school staff. Hopefully our TeacherWeb homework pages and our PowerSchool parent access will become valuable tools to assist with this type of important involvement.

Never underestimate the importance of attending events in which your student is a participant, whether it is sports, drama, music, etc. Your presence is a powerful celebratory statement to your student about the value and importance of the activity and the effort expended. It also provides opportunities for you to learn what your student has been working on and to meet other parents whose students are involved in the same activities.

*(Concept, content, and organization borrowed from Foxborough High School Communication Guide, Lexington High School's Communication Guide, Lexington Public Schools School Council, Lexington High School Parent/School Communication Guide, Lexington: 2005. Used with permission.)*