

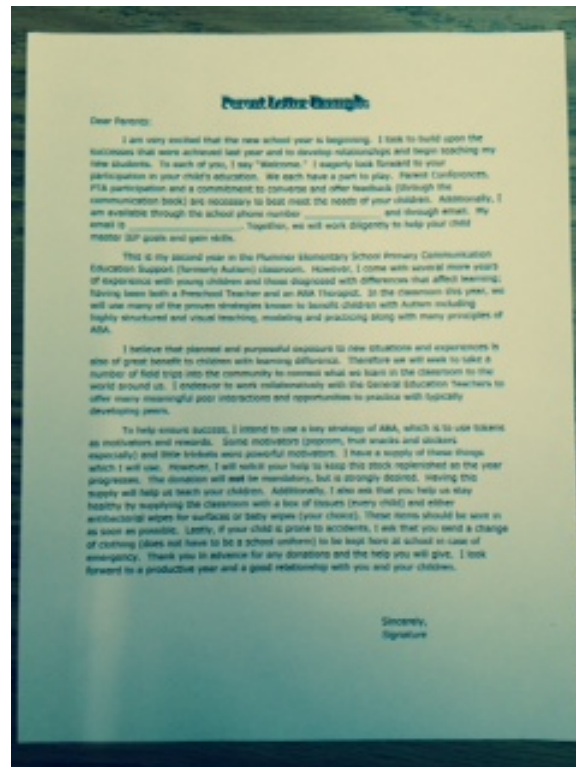
BOY Toolkit for Special Education Teachers

The beginning of the year is a very crucial time to begin building a rapport with the families of your students. Those first few days can set the tone for the entire year. A variety of tools can be utilized by a Special Education Teacher to open the lines of communication with families. Establishing communication early and giving families concrete ways to communicate (as well as finding out best ways to reach them) goes a long way to maintaining communication throughout the year.

One important piece of information is a letter of introduction. In conversational language, you can share:

- A bit of your background including your qualifications to teach the students.
- Your ideas about what you want the students to accomplish
- Goals you have for yourself as a teacher
- Topics you intend to teach over the course of the year
- Major supplies and how they will enhance student learning
- Also provides important contact info [school address, email address, school phone numbers and cell phone number (if comfortable)].

* If you loop with students this letter is a good refresher. It may also be a good idea to share a new piece of information about yourself or your teaching style.



Another important piece of information is the Parent Questionnaire. As an educator, you quickly learn that your students will be different. Parents are experts on their own children. They know habits and patterns of behavior as well as counteracting negative behaviors. Asking specific questions will help you understand some things about the child early on. Parents can offer very helpful insight into how to deal with the students in your care.

As a special educator, one can ask questions related to the child's disability. Having specific information about how the disability manifests in the child can be a great support to all involved. Such information arms special education teachers with vital information to support with general classroom teachers. The special educator can offer strategies earlier to impact and bolster student learning. Understanding how the disability affects the student can help teachers craft lessons as well as inform on how to help the student learn despite the disability.

Parent Questionnaire

1. What are your child's areas of strength?
2. What types of things work best for child in terms of rewards and motivation?
3. How does your child best communicate with others (spoken language, sign language, written language, picture symbols)?
4. Does your child use echolalia (words or sounds that are not communications)? Scripting (repeating what was heard on television or in a movie)?
5. Do changes in routine or transitions to new activities affect your child's behavior? If yes, please explain.
6. Does your child have any sensory issues that may be an issue in school?
7. What behaviors related to autism are I likely to see at school? In your best experience, what are the best ways to manage the behaviors and get your child back on track?
8. What is your contact information and what means is best to contact you?
9. Is there anything else I should know about your child?

A third important piece of information is the student info sheet. Having such information assures that children in your care are kept safe. Most of this information is kept on file in other places in the school building however some necessary pieces of information may not be relayed to classroom teachers in an expedient manner. Getting this information from parents first hand is very helpful. Having the information enables you to have quick access

to contact parents or other in event of an emergency. It also allows you to know very early of any special concerns or considerations for the children in your classroom.

Student Information Sheet

Name: _____ DOB: _____

Parents Name(s): _____

Home Address: _____

Contact Means(s): Home _____ Cell _____

Work: _____ Email: _____

Which is your best means of communication? _____

Any siblings? If yes, how many? _____

Any allergies/medications: _____

How does your child get to school? (Please circle)

Schoolbus Walk Car Public Transportation

Emergency Contact(s): (Name, phone number and relationship to the child)
Are any of these people authorized to pick up the child if you are unable to do so? If so, please indicate this

1. _____

2. _____

Additional Comments (please share anything else that you believe teachers need to know)

These are printed out on the first day of school and copied for each family to fill out and return. Friendly reminders are given to encourage families to return filled out copies by the end of the first week. For those families that do not do so within the first week it might be helpful to send another copy with a note explaining how important and necessary these forms are to their child's safety, well-being and education. If the student is old enough and competent, you may also interview the student to see how much of the information you can get from the student.

Parent Letter Example

Dear Parents:

I am very excited that the new school year is beginning. I look to build upon the successes that were achieved last year and to develop relationships and begin teaching my new students. To each of you, I say "Welcome." I eagerly look forward to your participation in your child's education. We each have a part to play. Parent Conferences, PTA participation and a commitment to converse and offer feedback (through the communication book) are necessary to best meet the needs of your children. Additionally, I am available through the school phone number _____ and through email. My email is _____. Together, we will work diligently to help your child master IEP goals and gain skills.

This is my second year in the Plummer Elementary School Primary Communication Education Support (formerly Autism) classroom. However, I come with several more years of experience with young children and those diagnosed with differences that affect learning; having been both a Preschool Teacher and an ABA Therapist. In the classroom this year, we will use many of the proven strategies known to benefit children with Autism including highly structured and visual teaching, modeling and practicing along with many principles of ABA.

I believe that planned and purposeful exposure to new situations and experiences is also of great benefit to children with learning difference. Therefore we will seek to take a number of field trips into the community to connect what we learn in the classroom to the world around us. I endeavor to work collaboratively with the General Education Teachers to offer many meaningful peer interactions and opportunities to practice with typically developing peers.

To help ensure success, I intend to use a key strategy of ABA, which is to use tokens as motivators and rewards. Some motivators (popcorn, fruit snacks and stickers especially) and little trinkets were powerful motivators. I have a supply of these things which I will use. However, I will solicit your help to keep this stock replenished as the year progresses. The donation will **not** be mandatory, but is strongly desired. Having this supply will help us teach your children. Additionally, I also ask that you help us stay healthy by supplying the classroom with a box of tissues (every child) and either antibacterial wipes for surfaces or baby wipes (your choice). These items should be sent in as soon as possible. Lastly, if your child is prone to accidents, I ask that you send a change of clothing (does not have to be a school uniform) to be kept here at school in case of emergency. Thank you in advance for any donations and the help you will give. I look forward to a productive year and a good relationship with you and your children.

Sincerely,
Signature

Parent Questionnaire Example

Student's Name: _____

Parent's Name: _____

1. What are your child's areas of strength?
2. What types of things work best for child in terms of rewards and motivators?
3. How does your child best communicate with others (spoken language, sign language, written language, picture symbols)?
4. Does your child use echolalia (making sounds or noises that are not real words) or scripting (repeating things heard or seen from television and movies)? If so, how frequently?
5. Do changes in routine or transitions to new activities affect your child's behavior? If yes, please explain.
6. Does your child have any sensory issues that may be an issue in school?
7. What behaviors related to autism am I likely to see at school? In your best experience, what are the best ways to manage the behaviors and get your child back on track?
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Phone Number(s): Home: _____

Cell: _____ Work: _____

Any siblings? If yes, how many? _____

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How does your child get to school? (Please circle)

Schoolbus

Walk

Car

Public Transportation

Emergency Contact(s): (Name, phone number and relationship to the child)

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