

IAMS Communication Practices

It is widely recognized that effective family-school communication and resulting parent participation contributes to improved student achievement and better learning outcomes. Effective communication and family involvement can improve student behavior at school and create student beliefs that contribute to academic achievement including a positive attitude about school, greater time spent on learning assignments, increased attention and persistence in completing school assignments, and enhanced personal responsibility for learning. With this in mind, IAMS is working to establish strong and positive family-school communication best practices that will enable all IAMS community members—administration, teachers, parents and students – to gain a shared understanding of school goals, individual student learning needs and strengths, and effective home support strategies for school achievement. In addition, good communication will help to ensure active participation in extra-curricular school events, thereby enhancing the community experience for everyone and improving student achievement.

The following information is designed to help all IAMS community members better understand the current communication practices at IAMS and what information they should expect to receive or provide during the school year. This information also addresses where to direct your questions and how best to communicate with teachers and the administration.

Below is a list of the ways to communicate about academics, school events and news, and changes to school policy and procedures during the school year. Note that the communication section addressing communication from parents is entirely based on the work of parent volunteers. Understandably, as parent leadership changes, forms of communication can be disrupted or discontinued. If you are a parent and would like to become more involved with IAMS, parent communication efforts represent a great volunteer opportunity. Contact the FELE Communication Committee Chair or a FELE officer to find out more about this volunteer opportunity.

TEACHERS TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Student Communication Folders – At the beginning of each school year, all students receive a yellow communication folder used to carry homework and information to and from school. The folder has multiple pockets for paperwork going to the school and paperwork going to the home. The center of the folder has sections to hold students' syllabi and learning resources. Children are expected to bring this folder home each school day and return it the following school day. Parents/guardians are asked to check the folder each evening to ensure that they receive information in a timely manner and to remove all graded homework and school notices.

Student Agendas – Students in grades 1-8 receive agendas each year. Students use the agendas to write their daily homework assignments. In addition, the agenda features the school philosophy, student rights and responsibilities, Peace Place rules, the IAMS calendar, the CPS calendar, and a parent guide for how to use the agenda.

Syllabus – This document is prepared quarterly within each grade level. It communicates the learning content, goals, and expectations for the quarter and how parents can help students succeed. It also helps parents know the language of instruction for each subject area.

Paper Flyers – All paper flyers from the faculty (or the administration) requiring a response will include a contact person and a tear-off portion (if applicable) to be returned and will be distributed in student communication folders. All flyers must be approved by the administration before being sent home.

Quarterly Performance Measures (Report Card, Progress Report) – All students in grades K-8 receive a report card each quarter and a progress report at mid-quarter. Students in pre-K receive a progress report two times a year.

Biannual Parent/Teacher Conferences – Teachers will distribute schedules for parent/teacher conferences one to two weeks prior to report card pick up. All parents are expected to schedule a parent/teacher conference to pick up their child's report card (1st and 3rd quarter) and return the schedule form the next day. This is an important time for parents to review their child's progress with their child's homeroom teacher and better understand how they can help their child do well in school.

Grade Level Webpages – In Progress

Bulletin Boards Outside Classrooms – Information and/or student work is often on display on bulletin boards inside and outside of individual classrooms.

ADMINISTRATION TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS

IAMS Calendar – A school calendar is prepared annually to advise IAMS families of school events. Grades 1-8 students receive a copy of the school calendar in their agendas. Pre-K and kindergarten families receive a separate copy of the

calendar because their children do not use student agendas. The spring and summer calendar dates are subject to change based on the Chicago Cubs schedule which is not released until early spring. The most up-to-date school calendar is available on the [IAMS website](#).

All Call System – IAMS has an automated phone messaging system that allows the office to send out short messages to all IAMS family phone numbers. It is important that families provide the office with an up-to-date phone number to ensure that these messages are directed to the correct number.

Bulletin Boards – Look for information about parent committee activities and community events on the bulletin board across from the main office entrance (Fremont doors). Information and/or student work is often on display on bulletin boards inside and outside of individual classrooms.

Principal's Corner – You can find the “Principal's Corner” on the website. This regular message from the principal will focus on curricular and cultural aspects of our school for the year. It will serve as a way to keep families engaged with the unique mission of our wonderful school and the collective commitment it takes for our school to be successful.

Principal Discussion Form – The principal will hold several discussion forums throughout the year to dialogue with parents about important topics related to your child's learning in this unique dual language program.

PARENTS TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATION

School Handbook – The School Handbook provides IAMS families with a comprehensive overview of the school's day-to-day routines, policies and procedures as well as the school's mission, history and educational philosophy and information about CPS magnet schools. The handbook was created by parents in collaboration with the administration and teachers and is available on the [IAMS website](#). [add hyperlink]

School News – News items about school and community events are requested and posted regularly on the [website](#). All IAMS community members are encouraged to submit items of interest.

Puma Paper – A monthly newsletter created by FELE volunteers, distributed via email and posted on the [website](#). The Puma Paper serves an important purpose of connecting all Inter-American families. Check the website for specific submission guidelines and deadlines. In addition, past school newsletters are archived on the website.

Student Directory – The student directory, compiled once a year, contains the addresses, emails and phone numbers of all IAMS families that give their permission to release the information. The directory will be made accessible only to those members of the IAMS community who have a password protected account on the school website. The directory information may only be used for planning social events, carpooling and conducting school business. It is not to be used for commercial or business purposes and the information should be kept confidential. IAMS families can also access and update their information online any time by logging into their account.

Website – The IAMS website is located at www.iamschicago.com. The website provides current and prospective families and donors with general information about the school. Many publications are archived on the website such as past Puma Papers, the school handbook, approved LSC minutes and past LSC agendas.

Email blasts – FELE uses an online service to send out group emails with information about upcoming FELE, school and community events on an as needed basis and as FELE volunteers can accomplish. If individuals wish to receive emails, they must sign up on the [website](#). If individuals or groups wish to send out an email blast, they must submit their request to the FELE President or Communication Committee Chair for approval. Ideally, text should be submitted in both English and Spanish at least seven days before the blast is needed.

Paper Flyers – All paper flyers will include a contact person and their contact information and must be approved by the administration prior to release.

Organization Notices and Meeting Minutes – The IAMS Local School Council (LSC) posts its monthly meeting notice/agenda outside the main door and also keeps a paper copy of all approved meeting minutes in a binder located in the IAMS office as required by the Open Meetings Act. All formal committees such as PAC and BAC post their agenda on the parent—community bulletin board at the school's main entrance.

COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR IAMS PARENTS

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS?

IAMS understands that parent/guardians may have questions about the school or a particular program for which they cannot find an answer in the day-to-day communications provided at our school. To help in those cases, below is a list of who is responsible for addressing questions and on what topics. You can contact each of these individuals by email. Addresses are located on the staff and faculty directory on the website.

Academic

- Homework, syllabus, student agendas, grades, academic progress, behavior → classroom teacher

General

- Attendance → Assistant Principal
- Transportation → Assistant Principal
- After school programs → New teacher assigned yearly (check website)
- Cafeteria → Lunchroom Manager
- Parent Volunteering → Parent Volunteer Coordinator and Front Office Manager
- Boys' basketball → School Physical Education Teacher
- Library, book club, book fair, Battle of the Books → School Librarian
- Standardized testing → Assistant Principal
- Calendar → Child's agenda and website
- Unresolved issues → Principal
- Student fees → Office Clerk
- Special education → School Counselor
- School policies, budget and SIPAAA → LSC members and Principal
- School organizations → contact an officer of the group (website has officers listed)
- Student health records → CPS School Nurse (leave message with Front Office Clerk)
- High school application process → School Counselor
- Admissions → Principal

If you contact one of these individuals and do not receive a response within 2-3 days, please call the main office and ask the front office manager to leave a written message.

CONTACTING A CHILD'S TEACHER

A child's teacher is the first point of contact when a question arises. The best methods to make initial contact with a child's teacher are through either email or a written note in a child's communication folder. Please arrange in-person meetings with teachers in advance. Also, please understand that a child's teacher is busy teaching throughout the school day and usually cannot respond to your message on the same school day. Please give the teacher 2-3 days to respond. If you do not hear from your teacher after 2-3 days, please make a second attempt or call the office and leave a message in the teacher's box. If you are not able to resolve a classroom issue with your child's teacher, you may request a meeting with the principal by calling the front office manager to schedule an appointment.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Individual, academic and behavioral concerns regarding your child must first be brought to the teacher. If you don't think the issue is resolved, you can bring it to the principal. Please realize that not every issue may be resolved immediately and that it may not be possible to inform you of the actions taken due to legal and ethical obligations. Even in circumstances that involve more than one child, the teacher or principal can only address these matters on an individual basis.

CONTACTING YOUR CHILD DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

Students cannot be routinely contacted during the school day, as they are not allowed to have communication devices such as cell phones and beepers in the classroom. In addition, in order to prevent disruptions to classroom instruction, the school office can only deliver emergency messages to students while in class. If you need to make alternate transportation arrangements, please make those arrangements with your child in the morning before they leave for school. You must send a written note if you are changing transportation arrangements. The main office is not able to make transportation changes through phone call requests.