

Resource B

School Savvy Etiquette

E-MAIL

Respectful Response

- Try to return e-mail within 48 hours.
- If you cannot get an e-mail response back in that time, send a courtesy e-mail stating you received the e-mail and when you can respond.
- If someone from the district office sends you something, either via e-mail or snail mail, please respond to it as soon as possible. In fact, respond to anyone at your site as soon as possible, too.
- Beware of “reply all”—know to whom the e-mail is going.
- Be aware of text messages as well. Anything in writing can be subpoenaed.
- If you have a strong feeling about the e-mail you have just received and you need to respond, use the following suggestions:
 - Wait 24 hours.
 - Draft a response in Word.
 - Send the draft to the department chair, your coach, or a colleague to read it for tone.
 - Cut and paste a final version into your response e-mail.
 - “cc:” your supervisor if you feel he or she needs to be “in the know.”

Form

- Proof your writing to catch typos, mistaken or missing words, and grammatical errors.
- Use clear subject lines. Do *not* put names, especially *student names*, in the header. If you receive an e-mail with a student’s name in the subject, change it to “Your student” before you send it back.
- Consider your use of capital letters—they can be perceived as hostile.

- Consider your opener—the reader might forget what a “yes” or “no” refers to. Begin with a greeting and a reiteration of the question or topic: “Hello . . . nice to hear from you . . . with regard to your invitation/concern/assignment . . .”
- Consider if e-mail is the correct medium for the topic. If you have gone back and forth two to three times, voice or face to face might be a better way of handling the situation.
- Less is more. Shorter is almost always better in e-mail exchange. Think Hemingway: short noun-verb sentences and bullets.
- Limit the number of different questions or issues in one e-mail. If you include too many, some may not get addressed in response, and that can irritate. If you do have several answers, state you will respond to the questions with responses directly below the question. If possible, put them in another color so your reader can easily see them.
- Be aware that e-mail can be subpoenaed in a court case. Write only what you’d want to be seen in that type of situation.

STAFF, DEPARTMENT, OR COLLABORATION MEETINGS

- Be on time to all meetings; in fact, be there a few minutes early.
- Bring what you need for the meeting. If they asked you to bring suggestions, paperwork filled out, or a set of something, do so.
- Consider your use of a computer during the meeting and whether it is supporting the work or getting in the way of real dialogue.
- Do not text message during the meeting.
- Be considerate and put your cell phone on vibrate. If you need to answer it, do so with a quick “Just a minute” and wait until you are out of the room to continue the conversation. Do not talk from the table to the door.
- Do not do crossword puzzles, read the newspaper, grade papers, or do lesson planning during the meeting—behave in a way you would want colleagues to attend at a meeting you were leading—full attention makes for a better result. It will get noticed if you don’t.
- If a disgruntled colleague engages you, try to shift away from that energy. Don’t continue whispering to them during the meeting.
- If you need to leave the meeting, try to let the administrator know ahead of time so that when you leave, it is expected.
- Avoid defensive reactions—eye rolling, sighing, shouting out, or giggling.
- Offer an apology if disrespectful.
- Explain yourself and your mood (if stressed or if angry).
- If you are running the meeting, have an agenda and facilitate well. Learn how to keep things on track, how to ask people to adhere to norms, and how to work effectively with conflict.

WORKING WITH OFFICE AND SUPPORT STAFF

- Do not treat them as your assistants or with a condescending tone.
- Say hello to them when you come into the office and use eye contact.
- Ask if it is a good time to review something you need or when that time would be.
- If requesting an item, something copied, something done, give explicit instructions for the task. Don't assume understanding.
- Be aware of the procedures in place. If copying is done at 9 a.m., have it ready by then.
- Be aware of the proper channels. Do you need to get approval by a supervisor or a front office administrator to have a support staff assist you with something?
- Consider priorities; that is, what is immediate (something unsanitary on the floor that needs to be swept up immediately) versus something that can wait (fixing a light).
- If you break something or finish with something, please let someone know so they can handle it.
- Acknowledge everything they do for you and thank them.
- If something is not done, or a mistake has been made, address it directly, but in an understanding, unthreatening way.

DRESS

- Ask directly if there is a dress code for teachers.
- Read the student dress code and, by all means, do not break it.
- Make a visual poll of what your colleagues are wearing and go for a middle ground.

CONFLICT

- If you are struggling with something or someone, talk it through with your coach, the new teacher mentor at your school, or a very trusted colleague. Do not tell everyone in the lunchroom. Do not tell the parents about it when they come to pick up their children.
- If you are going into a difficult meeting with your supervisor or the principal, bring your coach or a trusted colleague if you can.
- If you can, go to the source whenever possible.
- Do not shout across the hallways or the quad to the person; approach him or her face-to-face.
- Do not send notes or e-mails stating only, "How about returning this?" or "How about getting this done?" and then adding an attachment. The impression isn't a good one.
- Do not have the difficult discussion in front of students.
- Do not talk to students about your conflicts with others.

- When discussing events, try to go “global/general” versus name dropping.
- Exercise care and caution regarding the time and place for addressing delicate topics, such as before school, after school, or during passing periods. Think about the impact.

ADDITIONAL SCHOOL SAVVY TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- *Relationships and Communication With All Support Staff*
 - Custodians, Aides, Volunteers
- *Technology*
 - Being on Friendster, MySpace, Facebook, or other Web-based service where you have a personal site and your pictures up so your students and their parents can see
- *Boundaries with Students*
 - Talking about students in front of other students
 - Talking with them appropriately in the hallways or on the campus
 - Talking to students about other teachers
 - Talking to students when they are disrespectful of other teachers
- *Boundaries with Colleagues and Parents*
 - Talking in the bathroom, in the parking lot, in the lunchroom
 - Talking in the grocery store, at a party, in the community
- *Classroom Sharing*
 - Materials, space, cleanliness
- *Curriculum and Materials*
 - Rewinding movies
 - Returning equipment (video cameras, calculators)
 - Using someone’s personal property
 - Textbook sharing
 - Keeping things organized
- *Absences*
 - Leaving clear substitute plans
 - Expectations of others covering classes for you
 - Personal days, sick days—How many? How often?
- *Thinking Aloud in Front of Certain Audiences*
 - Who is your ally? Your critical friend?
 - To whom can you vent? Cry in front of? To whom can’t you vent?
 - Considering political beliefs—being tolerant of others’ point of view
- *Family and Pets*
 - Bringing your dog, parrot, or infant or child to work
 - Bringing them to meetings or professional development
 - What is legal? What is appropriate?
- *Taking a Leave or Being Released*
 - Sharing info about a leave/pregnancy/change-of-employment status
 - How to talk about it, with whom, and when

- *Categories for Which One Needs Interpersonal and School Savviness*
 - Time—What is late?
 - Keeping your word
 - Sharing personal info in a professional space
 - Emotional expression boundaries: Can you cry? Yell?
 - Manners/courtesy
 - Noise levels—What is loud? Space—too close?
 - Dress—What is appropriate?
 - Food—Sharing it? Bringing it?
 - Language use—Is slang or swearing OK?
 - Hygiene