

Foxborough High School Communication Guide for Parents

Foxborough Public Schools Core Value:

Ensuring a quality education, cultivated by ongoing communication and shared resources among parents, teachers, town organizations, and residents, is the responsibility of the entire community.

Communication between home and school is a high priority at Foxborough High School. In the transition between youth and adolescence and between middle school and high school, the techniques of communication change as our children become young adults and their independence grows with their new abilities.

High school seems more removed from home, and the size of the school can hinder access. The student becomes his/her own primary advocate, but the role of the parent or guardian continues to be an important factor in the academic and social success of each student. Communication is the key element in helping your student gain the most from his/her education at Foxborough High School. Ongoing communication and shared resources among parents and teachers is a core value of the Foxborough Public Schools, and we, as parents, teachers, administrators, share the responsibility of modeling for our children the process of working together and of teaching the benefits of open and honest communication.

The FHS Council has assembled this booklet to aid parents in the process of communicating with their student's teachers, guidance counselor, and school administrator. It does not replace the Student/Parent Handbook which covers all areas of necessary information about FHS and deserves a careful reading, but it does give you as the parent/guardian of an FHS student an overview of avenues that can be helpful to you in communicating with the school and in keeping abreast of life at FHS.

It is the responsibility of FHS 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.

Call the Right Person:

There are several avenues for gaining information at Foxborough High School including the teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, FHS website, and general school publications.

Questions and concerns revolving around a specific class can generally be answered by talking directly to the teacher. If this does not prove satisfactory, you need to decide if your questions are curricular or administrative in order to take the next step.

Each extracurricular activity has a faculty advisor to whom you may address questions.

If questions are curricular or involve course selection and placement, you should contact the department head or your 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 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 questions concern 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. Calendar information is available through the Main Office, department offices, FHS publications and various web sites.

Parent/Teacher Communication:

Teachers are direct links to information about your student's academic life and can provide valuable information. They do, however, teach about 100 or more students each, please be considerate of their time and use avenues of communication wisely. In-person conferences, telephone conversations, and postal and email communications are all open to you. E-mail addresses, voice mail and phone numbers are available on-line at www.foxborough.k12.ma.us. Or contact the main office at 508-543-1616 for direction.

Conferences:

One evening of parent teacher conferences is scheduled for November 28th and November 29th. Information explaining how to schedule these conferences will be sent to parents in the fall. 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. In addition to the formal scheduled conference meetings with teachers, a meeting may be initiated by the teacher or by you 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 emailing 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.

Course Information:

Teachers provide written course expectation sheets through the student. Ask your student for a copy or request one from the teacher. Check with the Main Office, department offices, *Foxworthy Newsletter*, or the FHS website for schedules of special events (concerts, drama productions, shows, debates, etc.) that may be course related.

Formal Reports:

Report cards are sent home with the students at the end of quarters 1, 2, and 3. Fourth-quarter report cards are mailed home. The quarter dates are posted on the school calendar. A Progress Report is also sent home with each student midway through each quarter. Ask your student to see progress reports and report cards. Progress Reports may also be sent home at any time at the teacher's discretion or by parental request, especially if a student is having difficulty in the class. The dates of the progress reports and report cards are as follows:

Progress Reports distributed on: (*Term I*) October 3, 2008, (*Term II*) December 16, 2008, (*Term III*) March 13, 2009 and (*Term IV*) May 8, 2009, (seniors) May 20, 2009 (underclass-9-11).

Report cards distributed on: (*Term I*) November 17, 2008, (*Term II*) February 6, 2009, (*Term III*) April 17, 2009, and for (*Term IV*) all report cards are mailed home approximately 2 weeks after the last day of school.

Problems:

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 not satisfied or not clear 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 continue your search. The name of your child's guidance counselor appears on your student's course schedule, or can be obtained from the Main Office.

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 FHS.

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 Jeffrey Theodoss 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/Parent 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/Parent Handbook* for full details:

Please Call the Absentee Line if your son or daughter will not be in school - 508-543-1626 on the day of the absence.

Any call from the main office regarding unexplained class absences requires an immediate response! All absences are unexcused. A parent note 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. Students exceeding 15 absences during the school year will lose credit in that particular course.

It is important that any class absence incorrectly attributed to your child be remedied to prevent possible confusion on the permanent record.

Substance Use Policy:

Because FHS believes strongly in helping students to make healthy choices, there is a policy regarding use of illegal substances, which applies to the student's life both in and out of school. Please read the *Student/Parent Handbook* for a full explanation of this policy. The school cooperates fully with the Foxborough Police at all times.

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 for four years helping to promote both academic and personal growth. Each student is assigned to a guidance counselor (check your child's course schedule or the Main Office for his/her name).

Appointment with Students:

It is in your student's best interest to get to know his/her guidance counselor, and you can help that process by knowing when appointments occur and encouraging your child to stay in contact with his/her counselor as questions arise. You can also call your child's counselor at any time.

Check the *Program of Studies* to find out graduation requirements so that you can assist your child in planning the courses he/she should take during the four years at FHS.

Encourage your child to talk to his/her counselor if difficulties in any area of life at FHS arise. There is a social worker on staff to assist in complex issues. The Special Education liaisons, if your child is on an Ed Plan, can also be of assistance in curricular areas of concern.

College Information:

There is a library of college catalogues and application information in the Career Center in the guidance office. Its hours are essentially school hours, but students or parents can check out catalogues and tapes.

Your guidance counselor will be your primary source for information on college. That role becomes very active beginning in the junior year.

Opportunities for Involvement:

Parental involvement in the child's school remains valuable no matter the age of the student. Most teens

prefer not to see their parents at school, but continue to value their support through involvement in their school and activities.

Listed Below is some of the ways parents can be involved at school:

- Music - The FHS music department has extensive information posted on their departmental web page. In addition, the Foxborough Music Association is the support group for the Foxborough Public Schools Music Department. Information and volunteer opportunities are posted on their web site.
- Athletics - Many high school sports have active booster clubs at the discretion of the coach. Call Athletic Director Craig Najarian at 508-543-1616 ex.140.
- Extracurricular activities and clubs each have a faculty advisor. See the "Clubs" section of the High School web site for a list of clubs. When you click on the name of the club you will see the name and contact information for the faculty advisor. Contact the advisor with questions or to offer volunteer support.
- School Council - A school council is a representative, school building-based committee composed of the principal, parents, teachers, and community members and, at the secondary level, students. The mission of the school council is to share ideas and resources and to shape the direction the school will take to strengthen teaching and learning. When openings exist, elections are held in the fall. Council meetings are held monthly and are open to all parents/guardians of Foxborough High School students. Visit the school council section of the FHS web site for the current meeting schedule and additional information.
- Never underestimate the importance of attending events in which your student is a participant, whether it is sports, drama, music, etc. Not only is your presence a powerful statement to your student, it 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

Answering Questions and Solving Problems in the School Setting:

At Foxborough High School we strive to provide students with the opportunity to experience high academic achievement and steady social development as well as to provide an experience, which students will enjoy. For these goals to be fully realized it is necessary for the parents and school to work effectively as partners. There is no question that the four-year progression through High School can sometimes be stressful even though parents, students and teachers might all go to great lengths in an effort to provide smooth passage. It is during these brief stressful periods that cooperation among all parties is most essential. Please allow us to attempt to answer some of the questions we get most frequently on the topic of solving problems in the school setting.

How do I establish a relationship with my child's teachers?

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 at the High School is responsible for 100 students or more 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.

If I am worried or upset how do I keep the interaction positive and moving toward a good solution?

When problems arise everyone involved wants them solved as quickly as possible. Parents, teachers, and the student all have the same goal. No one benefits from prolonged worry. With that in mind it is best to begin the interaction with information gathering as the goal. Few, if any, issues are as simple as they might seem at first glance when seen through one set of eyes or when retold in an emotional context. It is always necessary to keep an open mind until all the facts as seen by all parties are articulated. Only after the facts, as seen by each party, are articulated is it time to define the issue and develop a strategy to deal with the issue. It is important to keep in mind that while some problems are quickly solved, others will

require several exchanges, often with different school personnel, and may require attention over many weeks.

My child says to stay out of it because things will only get worse if I'm involved. What should I do?

Issues do not resolve themselves. Some issues require a collaborative effort. You as a parent should carefully consider the information you have as you decide whether to become involved. In this context we have had parents call us to express a concern, but then ask us not to talk to the teacher and/or not to use their name due to a fear of retribution. We can only deal with issues when expressed in an open and forthright way. As mentioned above, we have the same goals and need to work as partners. Under no circumstances would any act of retribution be tolerated. No teacher would benefit from such an action. Indeed, the consequences of such an action would be severe.

What are the steps I need to take to address my questions/concerns?

The best place to start with any classroom issue is with the classroom teacher. They are the ones who are most likely to have the information that can clarify any issue or help resolve any conflict. Only after speaking to the classroom teacher should you bring an issue about the class or the teacher to a higher authority such as a department head, or principal. Of course, there may be questions or concerns that do not deal with classroom issues that are best addressed by counselors or administrators.

Should I call the Principal?

In general, the Principal should only get involved in resolving classroom issues after other avenues have been pursued. If an issue is brought to the Principal's attention he will always begin by fact finding, reviewing conversations that have been held, and assessing the strategies that have been tried.

Printed Information:

Foxborough High School has the following written publications:

- The FHS Newsletter is mailed home approximately every 6 weeks, and contains a calendar of events, as well as articles on events at FHS and student achievements. Information concerning deadlines for activities, SAT tests, etc., are included. It also contains a message from the Principal.
- The FHS Student/Parent Handbook is provided to every student in the fall. It is important that both you and your student know its contents.
- The *Program of Studies* contains course descriptions and graduation requirements. This too is important to both you and your child.
- The FHS Internet home page is <http://foxborough.k12.ma.us/fpsweb/FHS/FHSindex.html>.
- Anyone who is interested in receiving more timely information about pertinent school related issues should sign up through the Foxborough website by clicking "FHS Mail List" on the main page of the FHS website to join the list today.

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