



SMS School Direct Communication Policy School to Community, Community to School

We ask that all members of the Syringa Mountain School Community- staff, parents, volunteers, honor and practice direct communication. Open, honest and direct communication between and among parents and staff is a fundamental social responsibility, and one that we strive to model for our children. We believe direct communication contributes to the smooth functioning of the school and fosters a healthy, candid school community that supports all of its members. All SMS faculty and staff are upholding this communication policy and will direct you to the appropriate person to speak with as questions or concerns arise. When serious concerns or conflicts arise, we endeavor to practice direct communication, flexibility, and timeliness (resolve conflicts early so they don't get bigger). Direct communication helps to limit instantaneous, emotion laden reactions, slowing down and supporting our responses so they are more mindful, thought out and objective.

Our communication flowchart

Direct communication with teacher

Collaborative meeting to include other colleagues

Meeting with pedagogical director and teacher

Meeting with school director and pedagogical director

When all other avenues are exhausted, written communication to the full SMS Board

As questions arise, we require the effected parties to first schedule a face to face meeting to discuss and hopefully resolve questions quickly at their source. For most school related concerns, your child's teacher should be the first point of contact. Whenever possible and practicable, meeting agreements will be briefly summarized in writing and provided to the involved parties.

When an initial discussion between the effected parties does not result in problem resolution, the pedagogical director or school director, or both, should be invited to meet with both parties for further discussion/resolution. A meeting summary outlining agreements will be provided in writing whenever practicable and advisable.

Sometimes problem resolution requires more than one meeting. If after two meetings, issues remain unresolved or not resolved to your satisfaction, a letter communicating your concerns can be provided to the full SMS School Board. See the SMS Board grievance policy and procedure.

Consensus model of communication:

We use the consensus model to guide the quality of our communication, (taken from Winterberry Charter School). Our agreements:

Assume goodwill from all involved.

Seek unity. Is the spirit of the action moving in the direction of our shared values?

Discernment: Standing behind principal versus personal preference.

Stand aside/step aside: When too attached to personal preference, let the group move forward.

Recommended contacts for general inquiries about SMS:

School policies and school operations contact Dr. Mary Gervase, School Director

Pedagogical, curriculum, instruction contact Mende Coblentz, Pedagogical/Curriculum Director

After care and after school, contact Hannah Beane, After School Director

Site management and maintenance-Miles Teitge, Site Manager

*When unsure, please share your concerns with Svea Grover, our Office Manager and she will direct you to the appropriate individual.

Staff availability:

The SMS staff and faculty are committed to facilitating communication and strive to do all of our business as much as possible in person. Teaching staff have made the following times available to schedule meetings or phone calls: Tuesday -Friday 2:30-3:30 PM. (Every Monday is dedicated to staff communication from 2:30-3:30). Prior to school each morning is protected teacher preparation time, and not parent communication time unless someone is sick.

Electronic communication:

We do not consider email an appropriate forum for discussing student issues. Email is meant to be an info exchange not a conversational tool. It is our policy to schedule a meeting or phone call when concerns are brought to us via email.

Texts are for emergencies only.

We do not distribute our teaching staff's home phone numbers and request they not be used to protect our staff's personal and family time.

Anonymous communication:

Our direct communications policy dictates that we not respond to anonymous communication.

Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct-taken from SMS Family Handbook, Community of Caring Page 16

SMS's primary focus is to provide the best possible learning environment for the children in our care. In order to do this, we believe it is necessary to pay close attention to our interactions with each other as adults. If we are hurried, unkind or unfeeling to each other as we busily work "for the sake of the children", we miss a tremendous opportunity to contribute meaningfully to our children's education. We believe that it is what we do on a day-to-day basis that speaks most loudly to our children. All adults in the community—teachers, staff members and parents – should consider themselves at all times to be role models. The benefit to the children is immense when we speak respectfully to each other, avoid gossip, take concerns to their source, forgive readily, observe school policies and courtesies, and follow through with what we say we are going to do. Our goal is to develop a culture where we work together to hold ourselves accountable to these ideals. Any person on the school's campus is expected to uphold this school-wide code of conduct. Our deepest thanks.