



The Family-5

A Five Point Home/School Communication to Engage Families in Student Learning

The "Family-5" is a simple document to model high-quality home/school communications about teaching and student learning. The goal is to support both families and teachers as they build partnerships that help students learn at school and beyond the classroom.

FYI: When parents and families are informed about teaching and learning, they can play an important role in supporting student success.

- Parents can use this **Family-5** document to 1) gain information about their child's learning and performance expectations; 2) participate in informed communications with teachers; 3) learn new ways to support learning outside of school; 4) monitor ways their child is applying new knowledge and skills, and 5) share observations so the teacher knows how well their child is learning.
- Teachers can use the **Family-5** document to help parents and families become informed about "what" and "why" students are currently learning at school. It also allows teachers to share opportunities and ideas about "how" families can help. They can guide parents on how to observe ways that their child "shows" new learning. It is helpful for teachers to ask for feedback so they will have more information and "know" what the student understands and can do.

When teachers and parents communicate about the "**what, why, how, show, and know**" of learning, they can talk about student needs, jointly set goals, and create strategies to help the student learn at their best.

The **Family-5** method can make that process easy! Below are five points for teachers. On the other side of this document are five points for parents.

5

Points teachers consider when building Learning Partnerships with families:

- ✓ **What** – Families should know **what** their child is learning and be aware of the alignment with grade-level [Student Learning Standards](#) and the [Prerequisite Concepts and Skills for ELA and Math](#).
- ✓ **Why** – Families should understand **why** students are learning key concepts that build on foundational skills and form a connection to the "real world." Understanding basic instructional strategies allows teaching and learning to make sense.
- ✓ **How** – Modified instructional *support* strategies used outside of school can reinforce classroom instruction, prioritize a developmentally appropriate learning process, and outline **how** families can help their child apply new knowledge and practice new skills outside of school.
- ✓ **Show** – Sharing "Look-Fors" that are aligned with instruction provides a way for families to observe and monitor learning behaviors that their child is likely to **show** while learning new concepts.
- ✓ **Know** – Two-way communication as "Learning Partners" respects families and provides a way for them to know what their child is learning and share their observations and feedback. This type of communication helps both families and teachers **know** if the student is learning and how that information can inform future instruction. Observing and communicating also help parents **know** what they might expect to see on student assessments.

This document was created by staff at the New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Services, Office of Kindergarten to Third Grade Education. It is part of a model of home/school partnerships that complement the state's student learning standards. The Division of Early Childhood Services acknowledges the term "parent" to indicate an adult who plays a legal and significant role in a child's life. This may include parents, stepparents, parents' partners, foster parents, grandparents, extended family caretakers, and others who regularly contribute in important ways to a child's education and development. When known, the term "parent" or the term "family" is used precisely. When referring to groups, or those who share responsibility for the well-being of a child, the use of both terms, "parent and family" is inclusive and more accurate.



The Family-5

A Five Point Home/School Communication About Student Learning

Your child is a star! This Family-5 communication is built on the five points of that star and it outlines the main things your child is learning now. The five points below contain information about what your child is learning in school ... “**what, why, how, show, and know.**” This information is meant to be shared from school to home and back again. Two-way communication about student learning is a great way for us to build a “**Learning Partnership**” that will help your child succeed.

All families can support their child’s learning. Resources don’t need to be fancy or expensive and you don’t need to re-teach any lessons. The idea is for you to help your child use new knowledge and skills in the real world and communicate what you observe back to the classroom.

Support for your child’s learning includes something called “look-fors.” All families can use look-fors. Each lesson, assignment, and project include behaviors that your child will show when learning; that is what we *look for*. Look-fors are like mile markers on the journey to student achievement. The outcome of look-fors is a way for us to know if your child is ready to move on, or if we should provide support in other ways such as sharing a book at a higher reading level or taking more time to practice a skill. When look-fors are linked to student assignments you can look for those learning behaviors and send your observations back to school. When your child uses new knowledge and skills or struggles to apply that knowledge and skill outside of the classroom, your observations and feedback help us know more about your child.

You know your child best and you are the expert on the learning you see outside of school. When this document is used as two-way communication between home and school, we have created a **Learning Partnership** and together we can help your child learn more!

Here is some information about the “**what, why, how, show, and know**” of your child’s learning right now.



5 Points teachers can share with families to support their child’s learning:

What This is **what** your child is learning in class. It aligns with the NJ Student Learning Standards. You can learn more about the learning standards here ([Student Learning Standards](#)).

Why This is **why** your child is learning it and how it will be used in the real world.

How This is **how** you can help your child learn it outside of school.

Show These are some “Look-Fors” or behaviors your child is likely to **show** while learning new skills.

Know Communicating as Learning Partners allows us both to **know** if your child is learning new information.

When your child is learning, this is how you can share what you see:

As your child’s teacher, I hope you will share your observations and contact me if you have questions or want more ideas to support your child’s learning. This is my contact information: