# 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 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 your 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 their child “shows” new learning. Teachers should 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 his or her best.

The Family-5 method can make that process very easy!

## 5 Points teachers can communicate with families:

**What** – Families should know what students are learning and be made aware of the alignment with grade-level [Student Learning Standards](https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/), [Instructional Units](https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/), and/or [Prerequisite Concepts and Skills](https://www.nj.gov/education/cccs/instructionalunits/conceptsandskills/).

**Why** – Families should understand why students are learning key concepts and their connection to the “real world.”

**How** – Modified instructional *support* strategies can reinforce instruction and outline how families can help their child learn outside of school.

**Show** – Using “Look-Fors,” families can observe and monitor learning behaviors that the student is likely to show while learning new concepts.

**Know** - Communicating as “Learning Partners” respects families and allows them to provide their observations and feedback so teachers know if the student is learning the concept and how it can inform future instruction.

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 that helps families know about their child’s learning “*what*, *why*, *how*, *show*, and *know*.” On a regular basis, this information is meant to be shared from school to home and back again. Two-way communication about student learning is a great way to build a *“Learning Partnership”* that will help your child succeed.

*All* families can enrich their child’s learning. Resources do not need to be fancy or expensive and parents do not need to re-teach any lessons. The idea is for you to help your child use their new knowledge and skills in the “real world.”

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 will indicate your child understands and is 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. When teachers share look-fors linked to student assignments you can look for those learning behaviors and share your observations with the teacher. When your child uses new knowledge and skills or struggles to apply that knowledge and skill outside of the classroom, your feedback helps teachers as they instruct and support your child.

You know your child best, including what excites your child about learning! Classroom teaching and learning regularly change and when this document is used as two-way communication between home and school, children learn more!

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

5 Points for families to support their child’s learning:

What - This is what your child is learning. It aligns with [NJ Student Learning Standards](https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/). ([You can find more about it here](https://www.nj.gov/education/cccs/2020/).)

Why - This is why your child is learning it and how it connects to 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 he or she learns the new concept.

Know – Communicating as “Learning Partners” allows us to know if your child is learning a new concept.

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:

This document was designed 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 for home and school partnerships that complements the state’s student learning standards. The Division of Early Childhood Services acknowledges the term “parent” to indicate any adult who plays a legal and significant role in a student’s life. This includes parents, stepparents, parents’ partners, foster parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, extended family caretakers, and others who regularly contribute in important ways to a child’s education and development. The term “Parent” may be used interchangeably with “family” or the phrase “parent and family” when referencing those who share responsibility for the well-being of a child.