

Tips for corresponding with students

Communication with students has slightly different conventions than most email, social media, or other electronic communications. It can be both informative in nature and necessary for establishing trust in the classroom.

We've come up with a few suggestions about formatting and tone that we'd like to share below, while also acknowledging that all lists have their limitations. And like any list, it's only the beginning of a conversation. We look forward to elaborating on this with our colleagues and welcome you to join us at our programming.

Things to keep in mind:

- Do not send too many messages to students, combine your ideas
- Let students know how you'll be communicating with them (email, Canvas, etc) so they can know what to expect
- In your communications, it's important for you to model the tone of your overall classroom
- If your message has a strong emotional tone, be sure to wait at least 30 minutes, but as much as a day before sending it

Format:

- Keep communications succinct and clear
- Avoid all bold, all capitalized letters, or otherwise emphasizing a large portion of your text
- Utilize bullet points for emphasis & for questions you'd like students to answer
- Make sure to use full sentences with correct punctuation
- Write professionally with each paragraph or section having a purpose
- Proofread your writing
- Sign your message with your full name and your contact information

Tone:

- Lead with kindness, respect, and curiosity
- Before sending, read your message carefully (and aloud) to discern the tone
- Avoid any rhetorical questions, or questions that you wouldn't/couldn't answer yourself
- Watch for jargon and/or idioms
- Avoid for biased or culturally inappropriate language

Before sending anything to students, ask yourself:

- How will this come across to students?
- Am I being aggressive?
- Will a student feel safe enough to engage with this correspondence?
- *Is this message promoting a sense of belonging and community in our classroom?*