

Making Tangible Connections Through Cyberspace

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Many times my college professors stressed that communicating with your students' parents is crucial. Upon arriving at my first job posting, other teachers and the administrator emphasized how important communication with parents really is. I started to think about the different ways I could keep the parents informed about what was happening with their children at school.

Each parent is different, each household is different, so as a teacher you must be able to use many different methods in communicating. Here are a few ways to keep the communication lines open between the home and the school.

- Make yourself available before and after school to catch parents when they drop off or pick up their children.
- Phone parents to inform them about student problems and/or praises.
- Use notes in agenda books or homework books that are sent home with the student.
- Send e-mails to inform parents about missing homework or upcoming events.
- Publish a school newsletter that gets printed and distributed regularly.



One project that I started in last year was producing an online version of our school newsletter, the AvaNews. We would still produce hard copies to distribute to each family but I wanted to take advantage of the Internet as a quick and convenient way for parents to receive information. My students' backpacks are not always reliable methods for news delivery. Many of my students' backpacks are similar to black holes and once an assignment is put in, it is lost forever.

What I didn't realize was the impact the online newsletter would have, not only with our students' families, but also both inside and outside our community. The online version of the AvaNews is a colourful way of sharing what our school is doing. It is an excellent form of communicating our events, other experiences, and announcements. I have created a simple website where pictures, announcements, messages, student projects, class trips, birthdays, artwork, and calendars can all be displayed. Every two weeks I use the same template and create a new issue of the AvaNews. The link to this site is emailed to a mailing list when the new issue is created. This mailing list includes the entire student body as well as other teachers, friends and family members of the school. This simple link has been forwarded to many people outside of our mailing list and it is amazing how our school is touching people all across our province and country.

There is no limit to the production of a newsletter online. It can be as many or as few pages as you want it to be because you can't run out of paper. It's bright and colourful and it's an easy way to share students' progress with their families no matter how distant.

Here are a few comments I have received from parents about the online version of the AvaNews:

“We have very much appreciated the online contact with the school. It was great to see my own articles or advertisements up close and enjoyed not only the content but the bright pictures (colour). They were always so much nicer than the hard copy.”

“We certainly had no excuse for not knowing what was happening at the school.”

“I have read the AvaNews faithfully and find it very informative. I have learned a lot about the other kids and activities that I otherwise wouldn't have and the presentation is amazing. It's very well laid out and so professional looking. I save the pictures that I want on my computer and have quite a file developing, my child loves to look at her Kindergarten Art from the year and I will have it forever thanks to the emailed AvaNews!”

“The on-line version doesn't get lost on the way home from school. It is there when I have time to look at it, and it's environmentally friendly!”

“I have used articles that were written in the AvaNews in my Sabbath School program where I worship and then people in the congregation wanted copies of the articles I used.”

It's amazing how closely our school has connected with our parents this year through the use of the Internet. Tangible connections with people are possible through cyberspace and I hope we as educators can use this tool to better our relationships and communication with them. Please feel free to visit the AvaNews at:
<http://home.cablerocket.com/~avalonschool>.