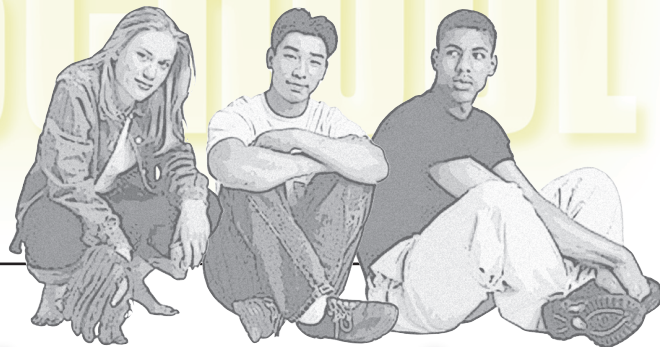


HIGH SCHOOL
PARENT

Can you hear me now? Learning to communicate

During his campaign, President Obama texted the media and his supporters to announce his choice of Joe Biden as his running mate. The message is clear; electronic communication is here to stay.

But communication is more than brief snippets of coded words or personal photos shared with friends. Merriam Webster defines “communicate” as “to convey knowledge of or information about; make known.” In other words, people communicate every time they write, speak, or act.

The challenge arises when teens fail to distinguish between communicating with peers and communicating in the academic and business worlds. TTYL (talk to you later) may work with friends, but would hardly impress a potential employer. Helping teens understand the need to communicate effectively with all groups is a key to lifelong success.

Three forms of communication

The written word—Today, most teens grab their cell phones to text—not to call.

Ask teens why they text rather than speak and you will likely get responses like, “I wanted an answer, but didn’t have time to talk,” or “I didn’t want to talk, I just wanted to say ‘hi.’” It makes perfect sense to teens, but the idea of one-sided messages without the instant feedback of conversation baffles many parents and employers.

Written communication is not limited to the cell phone. Teens fill their Facebook and MySpace pages with everything from one-line updates to poetry or musical lyrics that speak to their lives. Although social networking sites are now a normal peer-to-peer communication tool, they come with risks. Many teens naively think that their quotes and photos are private when in fact universities and employers often use those personal pages as sources of more information on applicants.

This abbreviated and informal writing can work its way into the more detailed writing a student needs in school or an employee needs in the workplace. If the reader doesn’t fully understand a particular expression or coded phrase, the intended message gets lost.

For example, a local employer complained that his highly educated staff frequently used abbreviated text or local slang when e-mailing international clients. Those e-mails often left clients confused, offended, or angry because the clients misunderstood the sender’s intent. Whether crafting an English paper or filling out a job application, teens must write clearly or risk losing the message.

The spoken word—Few things can stir human passions more effectively than conversation. A well-constructed sentence, delivered clearly and

audibly, both conveys the thought and reflects well upon the speaker. When teens speak, they must recognize that how they speak is often as important as what they say.

A young law student discovered that her speech was filled with “like” and “uh.” A thoughtful professor pointed out that this sloppy conversation made her sound unintelligent and disorganized, two traits that would limit her success in the courtroom. Determined to become successful, she “relearned” how to speak.

The “unspoken” word—Appearance and behavior are equally important communication tools. People judge others by what they see in addition to what they hear or read. A teen who wears a dirty shirt to an interview or stares out the window may appear disrespectful or inattentive. Although the teen may have a good explanation (like a flat tire on the way to the interview), that first impression becomes a hurdle to overcome.)

Everyone has the right to express themselves through personal clothing, hairstyles, jewelry or mannerisms, but those choices may come with consequences. It is important that teens understand that the image they present can impact their ability to communicate the desired message.

A parent’s role

Parents who encourage their teens to perform their best in the classroom or on the athletic field, may sometimes overlook the communication skills. Consider the following suggestions to help your children improve their futures by improving their communication skills today:

Model good communication at home. Take time to talk with your kids. Talk about sports, current events, family concerns or any other interest you might share. It’s good practice and goes a long way toward improving your parent-child relationship as well.

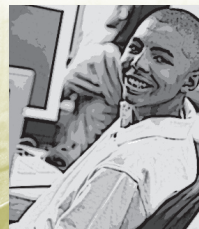
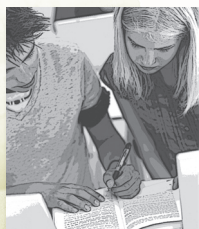
Encourage your teen to write a letter or an e-mail. Writing forces teens to more carefully consider what they say and how they say it.

Encourage your children to call. Sure, they can text yes or no questions, but when the answers are more complex, have them dial the phone. A two-way conversation avoids confusion and often yields more satisfying results.

Help them to see themselves. Help them understand that good communicators look at themselves through others’ eyes. Is the image your teen presents going to help or hinder the message? But, be careful not to let the conversation erode into a battle over their latest hair color or style of dress.

Help them plan ahead to avoid unintended results. A little planning before they write, text, or call can prevent an unclear message or a misunderstanding.

Encourage them to ask themselves basic questions such as, “Who is my audience; what message do I want to send; and what method of communicating will best make my point?”



Competitive Communication: **Academic Challenges Build Speaking Skills**

Many classroom activities help students develop their speaking skills, but extra-curricular pursuits can aid in the effort. One such extracurricular activity is academic competitions, which challenge students based on their memory, comprehension and deductive reasoning. At Schalmont High School, members of the MasterMinds Club participate in numerous academic competitions throughout the school year.



MasterMinds covers a variety of topics, such as art, biology, current events, history, literature, music, and sports. Varsity and junior varsity teams compete in tournaments throughout the year with hopes of making it to the final rounds of competition, which are broadcast on Time Warner Cable in the spring or summer.

Foreign language teacher Kathy Fagan has spent over 30 years in education. This year, she took on the role of MasterMinds advisor.

"It's a lot of fun," said Fagan. "It's so amazing what these students know."

This year's MasterMinds Club includes ninth-graders Kyle Chrysler and Hayden LaBelle; 10th-grader Christian Perkins; 11th-graders Kayla Countermine, Matt Gogis, Kaitlyn Perkins, Brittney Rehor, and Ben Sponable; and 12th-grader Erik Whalen. They recently participated in the Colonial Council Academic Challenge, which was hosted at Schalmont High School.

Students from the participating schools broke up into teams of four, and then two teams at a time competed during several rounds held in the auditorium and library. They fielded questions with topics as varied as where Eric the Red fled to after being banished from Iceland, what two filters you need to know how to change to earn an auto mechanics scouting badge, and what fluid to use when cleaning a latex-based paint. While the competitors didn't have to give speeches, they did have to think quickly and deliver clear, concise answers to score points.

"The competition experience reinforces everything they do academically in school. It also gives them a sense of team spirit and helps build their listening skills," said Fagan. "At least half of communication skills is listening and being thoughtful."

MasterMinds is one of more than 20 non-athletic extracurricular clubs and activities at Schalmont High School. Visit www.schalmont.org/HS/HSClubsactivities.htm to learn more.

NOTE: All events at Schalmont unless otherwise noted.

April

- 2 Friends of Music Meeting @ HS Library, 7 p.m.
- 6 Board of Ed. Meeting @ Jefferson, 7 p.m.
- 7-8 HS Drama Club Production
- 7 Hockey Assoc. Meeting @ Rotterdam Library, 7 p.m.
- 8 Athletic Assoc. Meeting @ HS Library, 7 p.m.
- 10-17 NO SCHOOL – Spring Recess
- 24 HS/MS Report Cards Issued
- 27 Board of Ed. Meeting @ MS LGI, 7 p.m.
- 15 HS Junior Prom Walk-in, 5:30 p.m.
HS Junior Prom @ Riverstone Manor
- 19 SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE @ HS New Gym Foyer, 6 a.m. – 9 p.m.
4th Annual Hockey Association Cookout, 1-7:30 p.m.
- 20 Marching Band @ Scotia Parade
- 21 HS/MS Interim Reports Issued
Marching Band @ Rotterdam Parade
- 22-25 NO SCHOOL – Memorial Day

May

- 1 MS/HS Jazz Night, 7 p.m.
- 11 Board of Ed. Meeting @ MS LGI, 7 p.m.
- 12 Hockey Assoc. Meeting @ Rotterdam Library, 7 p.m.
- 13 Athletic Assoc. Meeting @ HS Library, 7 p.m.
- 14 HS Concert (Band, Chorus, Concert Choir, Wind Ensemble), 7 p.m.
- 26 Board of Education Meeting @ MS LGI, 7 p.m.
- 28 HS Alumni Wall of Distinction Induction Ceremony, 4:30 p.m.
HS Senior Awards Ceremony, 7 p.m.
- 29 HS Senior Banquet @ Western Turnpike Golf Course, time?

Don't forget to sign up to receive the latest high school news through the School News Notifier at www.schalmont.org!

Students in the Spotlight

Students at Schalmont High School accomplish amazing things in school, extracurricular activities and their community every year. Many of those accomplishments are shared on the school Web site. Visit www.schalmont.org/HS/HShome.htm and click on "Schalmont HS Student Spotlight" to find out who was spotlighted during the 2008-09 school year.



"...learning to communicate."

Spring 2009

Schalmont Central Schools - 401 Duaneburg Road - Schenectady, New York 12306

PARENT

A PUBLICATION FOR SCHALMONT HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS

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