



Corunna Public Schools • It's GREAT to be GOLD!

# The Communicator



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## Fattal's Forum

By Superintendent John Fattal

Parents of Corunna Public Schools' students have known for years we go the extra mile to develop positive working relationships with all of our families. They know how our "gold standard" stacks up to other districts. One example is how our staff contacts parents between now and September 30 to simply touch base and find out what questions they or their children have. In other words, we're simply checking in with our families to ensure their Cavaliers got off to a great start.

A personal touch.

I could go on and on telling my version of these phone calls, but sometimes others have already said it better. Today is one of those days. I'm going to share the following piece, framed around how our staff does that little bit more than others, as penned by teacher Clint R. Heitz.

When I first began teaching, calling parents terrified me. Each time I had to pick up the phone to talk about grades or behavior issues, I would panic, overthink it, and start looking for other pressing matters to take up my time.

On top of my own panic, my colleagues weren't always a great help. I heard story after story of parents arguing, taking their child's side at all costs, or simply ignoring the call entirely. Their best advice was to use the Sandwich Method: Start with something positive, break the bad news, and end on a positive note. But those thin slices of good news weren't fooling anyone; everyone knows a call from school is usually

a bad thing.

I lived in fear of making calls home until I heard Taylor Mali recite his poem "What a Teacher Makes," and these lines unlocked an epiphany:

*I make parents tremble in fear when I call home: Hi. This is Mr. Mali. I hope I haven't called at a bad time, I just wanted to talk to you about something your son said today. To the biggest bully in the grade, he said, "Leave the kid alone. I still cry sometimes, don't you? It's no big deal."*

*And that was the noblest act of courage I have ever seen.*

My students amaze me with their creativity, compassion, and courage all the time; why was I keeping those awesome moments to myself? Instead of waiting until I had a negative reason to call home, such as bad grades, missing work, or a behavior issue, why not call right away with something positive?

I began a practice of calling home right away to talk about positive experiences with students. In the first week of school, I call at least one parent a day, or I pick a couple of days to make multiple calls. Google Forms and Sheets make it easy to keep track of parent communication and to hold myself accountable to maintaining positive points of contact. Sadly, parents are often surprised to get a positive phone call about their child; even the parents of the most well-behaved students don't expect it.

The day after these calls, I've noticed students return to class with a smile, a thank you, and an appreciation that someone has noticed them for something other than a mistake. This strategy is even more powerful if you make it a point to call the parents of "those kids," the ones your colleagues may warn you about or who come to class withdrawn and a little cautious.

I had one such student—I'll call her Katy—in my freshman English class. Katy was painfully shy and terrified to speak in class, but also had a love of art. I made it a point to call her mom early to share successes and discuss Katy's passion for art. Over the course of the semester, not only did Katy become more social, but we also found ways to make assignments more accessible, build confidence, and improve her general attitude toward school. A year later, Katy's mom reached out for help with her other child's academics. Two years later, I still catch up with Katy and her mom whenever our paths cross. To this day, I hang on to a piece of Katy's art (pictured) as a reminder of how awesome our students are.

The payoff of positive calls home continues to surprise me. Parents are no longer afraid when they hear my voice on the other end of the line. Parents who other teachers say never follow through or answer their calls now call me directly, check in on work, and make a point to say hello. Parents who have negative feelings toward school from their own experiences now see a positive connection.

What's even more compelling, for me, is the effect these calls have on students. Students have a few more smiles, a desire to connect in class, and appreciation for being noticed. Perhaps this foundation of respect, acknowledgement, and appreciation is the missing piece to forming relationships that change a life, or even just a day, for the better.

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John Fattal

Superintendent, Corunna Public Schools

### Community Education Classes

(989) 743-6338

Call to register or for more details.

#### Aqua Zumba with Tracy Schultz

\$5.00 each visit, join at any time.

Corunna Public Schools' pool

**Mondays**-August 13, 20, 27

September 10, 17, 24, October 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

**Wednesdays**-September 12, 19, 26

October 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

6:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

#### Water Aerobics with Danielle Lab

Five-Week Session for \$12.00

or \$3.00 drop in fee

7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

September 12, 19, 26, October 3

October 10, 17, 24, 31, November 7

### Heavenly Tumbles Gymnastics with Cindy Schweikert

Six-Week Session at Elsa Meyer Elementary

September 11, 18, 25, October 2, 9, 16

Cost is \$45.00 per child (6 week session)

Mommy and Me Classes, K-1, 2-6

#### Everyone Can Draw with Carrie St. John

\$65.00 for six sessions

September 12, 19, 26, October 3, 10, 17

6:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

Corunna High School

### Corunna Public Schools' Community Luncheon



September 12

1:00 p.m. in the

Corunna High School Cafeteria

Meals are \$3.50



### Getting Acquainted

Sixth grade students in the classroom of Ingrid Dettman are starting the year working on writing great paragraphs that contain topic sentences, supporting details, elaboration, transition words, and concluding statements. For now, students are writing about themselves in an effort to get to know each other better. Eventually, students will be reading articles and using this writing technique to answer questions about what they have read.

**Welcome New Staff**



**Kari Winters**  
Lead Preschool Teacher  
Children's Service



**Samantha Wright**  
Lead Preschool Teacher  
Children's Services



**Chrissy Johnson**  
Associate Preschool  
Teacher



**Connie Hargrave**  
3rd Caregiver  
Children's Services



**Thresa Andres**  
3rd Caregiver  
Children's Services



**Liz Vizi**  
Lead Preschool Teacher  
Children's Services



**Devyn Johnston**  
Preschool Teacher  
Children's Services



**Renae Williams**  
3rd Caregiver  
Children's Services



**Cassi Brodie**  
Teacher  
Elsa Meyer Elementary



**Laura Costa**  
Teacher  
Corunna Middle School



**Amy Galesk**  
Teacher  
Corunna Middle School



**Diane Villani**  
Teacher  
Corunna High School



**Megan Nault**  
Cook III  
Louise Peacock Elementary



**Shaun Parker**  
Bus Washer and Driver  
Transportation Department



**Joey McKinnies**  
Bus Driver  
Transportation Department