Student Communication Ambassador Toolkit

Empowering children and young people to become Communication Ambassadors at your school

What are Communication Ambassadors?

These are students at your school who are empowered to take on a leadership role in championing communication!

Recently, there has been a major growth in peer learning and support programmes within schools in the UK. So we know that terms like 'peer mentoring' and 'buddies' are rapidly becoming the new buzz words in improving school culture and the emotional and social wellbeing of pupils. That's because pupils' involvement in their own learning is supportive of good teaching practice and builds on learning theories such as those proposed by Bruner and Vygotsky. Meta-cognitive skills, pupil feedback and peer tutoring have been recently identified in the DfE-funded Educational Endowment Foundation Toolkit as the three most impactful and cost-efficient interventions to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.[1] The role of the student council also showcases the importance of giving students a leadership role, and the benefits of having a strong student voice within your school.

HOW DOES THIS LINK TO THE CODE?

It is important that Communication Ambassadors is seen as an inclusive idea, open to all pupils with or without speech, language and communication needs (SLCN); this idea fits with one of the key principles underpinning the 2014 SEND Code of Practice, which is the participation of children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) in decision making. Ensuring that pupils with SLCN are engaged in decisions not only about their own educational outcomes, but the outcomes for the whole school through becoming a Communication Ambassador, is one way to ensure that your school's whole approach to communication meets the needs of all pupils. The first chapter of the new Code outlines how this principle works in practice.

A Communication Ambassador could be someone who:

- Understands what good communication is and knows how to explain it
- Leads by example – they're excited to try out new things and confident taking on a leadership role
- Might be an inspirational role model for pupils with communication needs

A Communication Ambassador is someone who can:

- Support other students and feed back their ideas or concerns
- Be a student figurehead for the importance of communication
- Keep a lookout for new ideas and feed them back
- Showcase what great communication looks like!

[1] Higgins, S., Katsipataki, M., Kokotsaki, D., Coleman, R., Major, L.E., & Coe, R. (2013). *The Sutton Trust-Education Endowment Foundation Teaching and Learning Toolkit*. London: Education Endowment Foundation.

How to choose your Communication Ambassadors

Communication Ambassadors could be students who are already taking on a leadership role, or you might have a strong communicator in mind who would be perfect for the role! How you choose your ambassadors is entirely up to you. You could:

- Allocate the role to someone you have in mind
- Ask for volunteers
- Have a mini-election
- Get students to apply through your student council

What can a Communication Ambassador do?

The sky is the limit – but here are some simple ideas:

- Mentor younger students in your school – this could be with reading, supporting transition or with a specific communication activity; most important is that they are a role model for younger students.
- Make a display about good communication in a prominent place in your school
- Find out if other schools in your area have a student leadership program – you could arrange for students to meet up and share ideas, or set up social media links between your schools.
- As most of the students will be social-media savvy, they could to do a podcast or blog!
- Get Communication Ambassadors together to talk about communication at assembly or in class.
- Feed back when they see pupils or staff communicating really well – ambassadors could design certificates which they can give out in assembly.
- Be 'talk buddies' in the playground at break time.
- Work with the student council – make communication the topic of the month and put it on the map for your school. Create a whole new bank of ideas; students often have the most creative ideas.
- Make a display of famous people who have used good communication skills to achieve great things.
- Get their parents/carers involved – invite them to come into school and see what the Ambassadors have been doing to promote good communication, or write something in the newsletter.
- Promote communication at lunch or break time – Communication Ambassadors could lead reading groups, debate groups, football manager meetings – anything that gets students communicating!
- Take over your job with the register – making sure they focus on good communication.
- Look after visitors, telling them about the school and showing them around
- Have a role at parents' evening – showing parents around and showcasing their great communication skills!

What can you do to support them?

- Make a display showcasing your Communication Ambassadors – so everyone knows who they are and they feel proud of their important role!
- Make sure the students know their ideas are being heard – you could have a staff representative that the ambassadors feed back to.

For examples of how young people with SLCN can be a real inspiration and support communication in their whole community, have a look at the winners of the Shine a Light awards, sponsored by The Communication Trust and Pearson Assessment.