

Telephone Calls

Purpose: To provide consistency in telephone call and voice mail practices throughout the district.

Use: As a reference when responsible for answering the phones.

GUIDELINES FOR PHONE CALLS:

1. Personally answer the main line in each school and department. When times are too busy and the call goes to voicemail, provide choices for the departments where they can leave a message.
2. Answer all calls within three rings.
3. Greet each caller with the name of the school and your name "ABC Elementary School. This is Mary Brown. How may I help you?"
4. Give each caller your full attention. If it is an urgent call, especially from a parent, take responsibility for seeing the problem is resolved.
5. Give callers a choice before transferring them to voicemail.
6. Change your voicemail message to reflect when you are out of the school or office for 2 or more days and give callers an alternative person to call.
7. Return most calls within 24-48 hours.
8. Provide the number that a call is being transferred to and stay on the line until the call is successfully transferred. Ask the caller to call you back if the call goes awry.

9. Thank each caller for calling.
10. Tell the caller assistance will be provided in his or her language if the caller does not speak English well.
11. Tell people if you do not know the answer and then refer them to someone who does.
12. Recognize you cannot satisfy every customer, but you can respect every customer and listen to their needs.



Tips & Hints

- ❑ Customize the main line voice message – "Due to the number of calls we receive at the start of school, we may not be able to answer this call personally. Please leave your name, number and reason you are calling, and someone will get back to you within 24-48 hours. If this is an emergency, please call xxx-xxxx."
- ❑ Inform callers in your voicemail message that most calls are returned within 24-48 hours.

Walk-ins and Visitors

Purpose: To provide consistency in face-to-face practices for school and district offices.

Use: As a reference when responsible for greeting walk-ins and visitors.

GUIDELINES FOR WALK-INS & VISITORS:

1. Greet each walk-in or visitor immediately and if necessary, ask him or her to wait until you are done with the customer you are currently working with.
2. Let non-native speaking visitors know you will get them assistance in their language as soon as possible.
3. Thank all walk-ins and visitors for coming in and invite them back.
4. Tell people when you do not know the answer and then refer them to someone who does.



Tips & Hints

- ❑ Memorize some basic Spanish phrases to ask Spanish-speaking customers to wait a moment or to let them know you will be getting them assistance in their language.
- ❑ Whenever possible during the busiest morning and afternoon times for calls and visitors, make sure there are two staff members at the front desk to provide service.
- ❑ Remember students are customers too.



Cultural Responsiveness – Remember the iceberg!

Effective Communication

Purpose: To help you communicate more effectively with your customers.

Use: For reference when talking with customers in person or on the telephone.

COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES:

Putting Callers on Hold:

1. Always **ask** callers if you may put them on hold.
2. Wait for a **response**.
3. Tell callers **why** they are being put on hold.
4. Give a **time** frame.

Transferring Calls:

1. Explain why the caller is being transferred and to whom.
2. Ask the caller if he or she minds being transferred.
3. Make sure someone is there to answer the call before you hang up.
4. Tell the person to whom you are transferring the call the caller's name and the nature of the call.



Tips and Hints

Body Language/Tone of Voice:

- ❑ Energy level is important – you lose about **30%** of the energy over the phone, put extra energy in your voice or you may sound apathetic or hesitant.
- ❑ Establish rapport by adjusting your speaking rate to the customer's.
- ❑ Good body posture: sit-up straight, head-up or stand.
- ❑ Voice volume– you only need to project your voice one foot in front of the receiver
- ❑ Your voice is an instrument, vary -- tone, pace and volume!

E-mail:

- ❑ Write a meaningful subject line.
- ❑ Keep the message focused and readable.
- ❑ Identify yourself clearly.
- ❑ Proofread.
- ❑ Don't assume privacy.
- ❑ Check your inbox regularly.
- ❑ Don't send to the world.

Difficult Customers

Purpose: To help you work through difficult situations with customers.

Use: For reference when dealing with upset or angry customers.

STEPS FOR DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS:

1. Let the customer vent and **listen**. Don't argue. Don't defend. Don't interrupt.
2. Avoid getting trapped in a negative filter by putting a label on the customer.
3. Express empathy to the customer.
4. Listen attentively and show you are listening.
5. Ask questions to help clarify your understanding of the concern.
6. Offer option and agree on a solution.
7. Thank the customer.
8. Take action and follow through, involving your principal or supervisor if necessary.



Tips and Hints

- ❑ Angry or upset customers want two things: to express their feelings, and then have their problem solved.
- ❑ Conflict isn't necessary to resolve a problem or situation. It shouldn't be about control – work together to solve the problem. Sometimes thinking outside the box gets better results.
- ❑ Use PBR – Pause Before Responding – to allow the customer to think for a moment and for you to gather your thoughts and composure before responding.
- ❑ Remember not to take it personally. Accept the customer's feelings.
- ❑ Practice stress relief techniques after difficult interactions.