Youth Leadership Summit: Communication—What's Your Snap?

Amber Stokes, Sheridan Kautzmann, Michael Kraus
Published by *K20 Center*

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 License

Essential Question(s)

How does seeing a message through the receiver's eyes change the way you communicate with the different people you rely on in school and on campus?

Summary

This session builds students' ability to communicate effectively and professionally in academic and campus settings. By composing and revising real-world messages — to instructors and a resident advisor — students learn to see their communication through the receiver's eyes, adjusting tone, clarity, and professionalism based on audience and relationship. The session grounds these skills in situations that students are likely to encounter on campus, from an unexpected disruption before class to a roommate conflict, giving them a practical framework they can carry into instructor emails, resident advisor (RA) conversations, and other communication they'll navigate throughout college.

Learning Goals

Standards

College and Career Preparation Standards 6–12 (6th -12th)

12.12.3: Students will practice clear communication strategies (e.g., email etiquette, scheduled appointments, concise questions) for seeking assistance.

Attachments

- Anatomy of an Email—What's Your Snap.docx
- Anatomy of an Email—What's Your Snap.pdf
- Blank Email Template—What's Your Snap.docx
- Blank Email Template—What's Your Snap.pdf
- Inbox Disaster—What's Your Snap.docx
- Inbox Disaster—What's Your Snap.pdf
- Slide Presentation—What's Your Snap.pptx

Materials

- Inbox Disaster Example Worksheet (attached, one copy per student)
- Anatomy of an Email (attached, one copy per student)
- Blank Email Template (attached, one copy per student)

10 minutes

Engage

Introduce yourself and present **slides 1-4** as you see fit. Display **slide 5** and, without giving students any context, ask them to imagine themselves in this scenario:

- You woke up and headed to your car to get to class. You have a flat tire.

Ask students to use Mentimeter to create and submit a message to their instructor. Guide them through accessing Mentimeter with the QR code, web link, or session code. Allow students 3-5 minutes to respond. Then project and read student responses on the screen.

If you are unable to use Mentimeter, use the Commit and Toss strategy. Unhide **slide 6** and have students write their message on a piece of paper. Crumble up the message and toss it. Students then grab someone else's message to read out loud.

Move to **slide 7** and conduct a discussion with students. Use the questions on the slide to guide your conversation.

- What do you notice that's similar in the texts? What is different?
- How would you communicate about this situation with someone you're close to?
- How might your communication change when speaking with someone whose personality is very different from yours?

15 minutes

Explore

Pass out the **Inbox Disaster** handout and display **slide 8**. Have the students read through the email as if they are the instructor of an introductory college class and mark up the email with what stands out to them. Set the timer and allow students to read the email; they may not need all the time allotted.

After the students have read through the email, move to **slide 9** and ask the group the following discussion questions:

- What do you notice?
- Does it bring up any emotion?

15 minutes

Explain

Now the students will hear from a professor who received a similar email to learn what a professor thought about the email. Display **slide 10** and play the YouTube video Bad Email Reply - What not to say to your professor... You may want to pause the video near the beginning and pre-read the email to the students to give them prior context.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=zSNc8F9tqzY

When complete, discuss as necessary and pass out the **Anatomy of an Email** worksheet. This sheet is a quick guide to writing communications to instructors. Go through the rules to identify elements that students weren't familiar with when communicating to their instructors.

Pass out the **Blank Email Template**. Prompt students to rewrite the "Inbox Disaster" email to their professor that they read at the beginning of the session. Display **slide 11** and set the timer for 10 minutes.

After the students have rewritten their email, show **slide 12** and conduct a discussion, asking the group the following questions:

- What did you make sure to include?
- Did seeing emails through the eyes of the instructor help you draft your email?

10 minutes

Extend

Display **slide 13** to introduce a new scenario. What other types of communication might they write emails for? What other campus groups might they address their emails to? Suggest a new scenario, asking students to role-play a typical college scene:

You are having issues with your roommate. Reach out to your resident advisor (RA).

Presenter's Note

For high school students you may want to briefly explain the role of an RA or choose another scenario.

Have students use Mentimeter again to send a message to their RA. Walk them through the Menti code and link on the slide. Give students 3-5 minutes. The facilitator will project on the screen and read student responses aloud.

If you are unable to use Mentimeter, use the Commit and Toss strategy as before, unhiding **slide 14**.

10 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 15** and inform the participants that you are going to take a moment to reflect with a quick instructional strategy called POMS: Point of Most Significance. Instruct them to reflect on all the new information they've learned and conversations had through the discussions. Have participants share out their POMS.

- What was the most significant takeaway you gained today about communicating with your instructor?
- How can you use your takeaway with other situations?
    - Examples:
        - Joining an organization
        - Talking to your advisor

Research Rationale

First-generation college students often face challenges transitioning to college due to limited institutional knowledge, financial barriers, and fewer opportunities to build campus connections (Bolkan et al., 2021; Hallett et al., 2020; Havlik et al., 2020; Payne et al., 2023; Pratt et al.,2019). Research shows that students are more likely to persist and succeed when they develop relationships with peers, faculty, advisors, and campus support networks; when they learn how to communicate effectively with professors, upperclassmen, and fellow students; when they gain knowledge of campus resources; when they strengthen time-management and academic skills; and when they foster a sense of belonging within the college community (Bolkan et al., 2021; Demetriou et al., 2017; Hallett et al., 2020; Kulp et al., 2021; Payne et al., 2023). Therefore, programs are designed to provide these supports before the first semester begins through academic success workshops, campus resource sessions, guided campus experiences, wellness programming, and opportunities to connect with faculty, advisors, upperclassmen, and fellow students, helping reduce summer melt and strengthen students' transition to postsecondary education.

Resources

- Anderson, M. G. (n.d.). Bad email reply: What not to say to your professor... [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSNc8F9tqzY
- Bolkan, S., Pedersen, W. C., Stormes, K. N., & Manke, B. (2021). Predicting 4-year graduation: Using social cognitive career theory to model the impact of prescriptive advising, unit load, and students' self-efficacy. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *22*(4), 655-675.
- Demetriou, C., Meece, J., Eaker-Rich, D., & Powell, C. (2017). The activities, roles, and relationships of successful first-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, *58*(1), 19-36.
- Hallett, R. E., Kezar, A., Perez, R. J., & Kitchen, J. A. (2020). A typology of college transition and support programs: Situating a 2-year comprehensive college transition program within college access. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *64*(3), 230-252.
- Havlik, S., Pulliam, N., Malott, K., & Steen, S. (2020). Strengths and struggles: First-generation college-goers persisting at one predominantly white institution. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *22*(1), 118-140.
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Commit and toss. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/119
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Mentimeter. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/645
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Poms: Point of most significance. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/101???????
- K20 Center. (2021). 10-Minute Timer. YouTube. https://youtu.be/9gy-1Z2Sa-c?si=mZT8we776f2Oew46
- Kulp, A. M., Pascale, A. B., & Grandstaff, M. (2021). Types of extracurricular campus activities and first-year students' academic success. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *23*(3), 747-767.
- Payne, T., Muenks, K., & Aguayo, E. (2021). "Just because I am first gen doesn't mean I'm not asking for help:" A thematic analysis of first-generation college students' academic help-seeking behaviors. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*.
- Pratt, I. S., Harwood, H. B., Cavazos, J. T., & Ditzfeld, C. P. (2019). Should I stay or should I go? Retention in first-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *21*(1), 105-118.