Common Sense on
Effective Email Communication For Elementary Students

Some Facts

- 52 percent of people polled believe that "students are carrying over the writing habits they pick up through text messaging into school assignments" (*Edutopia* online poll, 2008)

- 64 percent of teens ages 12 to 17 said that text abbreviations and symbols made their way into their school assignments (Pew Internet & American Life/National Commission on Writing, 2008)

- Research has shown a relationship between children's knowledge of "text speak" and good performance on standardized tests of reading and writing (Plester, Wood, and Joshi, *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 2008*)

What's the Issue?

There is a high tolerance for misspellings and stream-of-consciousness ideas in text messages and informal emails. But what happens when kids need to write a formal message? Will they know how to change their writing style to match their audience? Sizing up your audience and making your words match are important skills for students to learn. Teaching our kids to evaluate their audience and create messages accordingly will help them gain more respect from their teachers and win better responses in any formal setting.

common sense says

- **Encourage your children to consider the audience and purpose of their email.** Using a more formal tone with people they have never met is the safest and most respectful way to communicate.

- **Prompt kids to get right to the point.** Most people have a lot of email to sift through. Keeping formal messages to one page is ideal.

- **Stress the importance of writing only what they would say to a person's face.** Anything kids would say over email should be something they are able to say to someone's face.

- **Suggest to children that they use uppercase type only on rare occasions.** Uppercase letters indicate that you are shouting. Kids should use them only if they really want to make a STRONG POINT.

- **Remind kids to proofread.** They should check their spelling, grammar, punctuation, and formatting before sending an email.

- **Coach kids to use emoticons sparingly.** Using smiley faces or exclamation points on occasion can help others understand their meaning in the absence of visual and vocal cues. However, they are usually inappropriate with more formal emails. :)

commonsense
media