

Considerations For Writing Documents to a Diverse Parent Community

Consideration	Guiding Questions	Rationale
<p>The main point is clearly defined and easily understood by non educators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is the one thing you want parents to come away with after reading the document? ● Is your main point clearly defined? ● Will non educators understand the point of the document if they read just the first paragraph? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Educators often want to get as much information as possible in one document. Yet, parents get a lot of information home and will not read a document if it looks too overwhelming. ● Many parents read the first paragraph to see if the document is useful to them. ● Many of our parents assume they won't understand the information.
<p>Don't use any language that needs to be defined.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does your document contain acronyms or educational language? ● Is the document written in simple language? ● Think about how the document will be translated. Do you think all the words are easily translated? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Educators often falsely assume that parents understand education language. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curriculum 2.0 ○ Enrichment ○ Assessment ○ Standards ○ Clusters ● Rather than helping parents be advocates for their children, many parents say that the language used in school documents may <i>disempower</i> them and make them feel stupid and frustrated.
<p>Remind parents that they can ask questions and provide multiple ways for the parents to connect with the the contact person.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is the contact person clear to readers? ● If the document is translated, is there a contact person that speaks the language? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many parents come from cultures where it is considered disrespectful to question school staff. These parents need to be told in multiple ways that MCPS encourages parent advocacy. ● Many parents are intimidated to speak to the school. ● Parents who do not speak English well do not think there are people at the school who can help.
<p>The layout should be easy to read for parents with different reading levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can you break up long or complex ideas into small sentences? ● Can you use bullets to convey your ideas rather than long paragraphs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many school documents are crowded with long sentences, little white space, and dense paragraphs. This kind of layout makes it hard for parents with low literacy skills to decipher the main points.