

Weekly Email Updates

Great things are happening everyday in the classroom! The more frequently teachers can communicate this with families, the more the families feel connected to, and a part of, the classroom community. While there are many ways to keep families informed, one helpful strategy is sending weekly email updates to share classroom events and to celebrate learning.

It is important to think about what parents want to know about classroom happenings, as well as what they can be doing at home to support their child's learning. These emails can contain a lot of information, but the more concise they are, the more likely that parents will read them each week.

In this artifact, you will see a sample "Weekly Update" email from an elementary teacher. Notice the following elements:

- **A friendly greeting** - Remember all communications should start positive and set a friendly tone.
- **Student celebrations** - Take the time to recognize a student (or group of students) for academic achievements. Families take pride in their child, and it also encourages other families to help their child stay on track.
- **Classroom learning** - When parents understand what their child is learning about in class, they can have conversations at home based on these topics. Providing questions parents can ask their child is another way to build this home-school connection.
- **School-wide events/announcements** - Recognize that your classroom is part of a bigger school community. Use these emails as an opportunity to encourage families to attend school-wide meetings and events.
- **Appreciative closing** - Families are working hard to support their children as best they can. Take a moment at the end to recognize them for their efforts. Notice, "Please let me know if you have any questions". Encourage families to get in touch with you - this promotes two-way communication.

Following the artifact, you will see a template that can be reproduced and catered to different classes and grades. Instructions for using Mail Chimp are also provided. This platform is user-friendly and allows senders to track readership. There are many approaches to sending weekly emails.

For Teachers

- **Collect email addresses for family members early in the school year.** Include a place for families to write their email address(es) on student surveys being sent home on the first day of school. Or, during home visits, try to collect this information.
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- **Create a list of all of the email addresses** - you can create a group that includes all of these addresses so that you do not have to enter all of the addresses each week.
- **Remember that email addresses change.** Be sure to ask for updated email addresses throughout the year.
- **Not all families may have email access.** Ensure that this information is received by all families. If not all families have an email address, these emails can be printed and sent home in folders.
- **Determine a schedule for when you are going to write and send your weekly emails.** Stick to this as best you can! Parents will come to expect and look for these updates from you!
- **Remember, the goal is two-way communication.** These emails are coming from you - but the more interactive you can make them, the more it will encourage your students' families to respond, or take action because of your email.
- **Make your emails engaging by using pictures and/or hyperlinks whenever possible.** Hyperlinks can provide families with more information about: the curriculum, school events, partnerships, field trip locations, and more!
- **Be mindful of families for whom English is not their first language.** If possible, have your weekly emails translated into the languages that your families speak. Someone in your building may be able to translate it (build this into your schedule), or use [Google Translate](#) to have the text translated.
- **CC your administrators and Special Subject teachers to these emails.** They can see what is happening in your classroom, and can also send catered messages to the families in your class if necessary.
- **Assume the best in all families.** You may not receive a reply from all families every week. This does not mean that they are not reading your email. Do not get discouraged! Continue to keep families engaged and informed.

For School Leaders

- **Communicate the importance of *frequent* updates with families.** Ask teachers to include you on their email updates - the more you are informed of classroom happenings, the better you can individualize your communication with families.
 - **In weekly staff newsletters, send examples of weekly email updates that teachers are sending.** Showing examples from within your building will encourage other staff members to give it a try!
 - **Remind families to check for these email updates from their child's teacher.** Write: *Have you been reading your class' weekly email updates? Be sure to let your child's teacher know if you have any questions about classroom learning!*
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Possible Topics to Include in Weekly Emails

- **Subject-by-Subject Updates:** What are the students working on in the different subject areas? What should they be practicing at home?
 - **Homework Tips:** What do the students need to do for homework this week? How can families best support this work? Are there any suggestions to ensure completion?
 - **Student Celebrations:** Have students made progress with a certain skill? Did students read over the expected amount of minutes on reading logs? Did the entire class return homework all week? (Note: While you are celebrating students, make sure you are not isolating students or making other students feel bad if not everyone is being celebrated.)
 - **School-Wide Announcements and Upcoming Events:** PTA Meetings? Literacy or Math Nights? Provide dates, times, locations, and any extra reminders.
 - **Classroom Events:** APTT Meetings? Field Trips? Publishing Parties? Give your families as much notice as possible!
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Sample Email:

Dear Families,

Good evening! I hope you all are enjoying the warm, sunny weather. Finally!!

We had an exciting Monday and have a full week ahead of us. Be sure to ask your child to tell you all about our Bean Bag Toss Challenge (this afternoon). This was a fun activity we did to review measurement skills. Ask your child: What tool did you use to measure the distance of your throw? How long did you throw your bean bag? What was the difference between you and your partner's distances?

Super Star Readers: Congrats to [students] who all read over 200 minutes last week!

FIELD TRIP REMINDERS: We are heading to the National Building Museum THIS THURSDAY. If your child has not submitted a permission slip (or has not given me 5\$ yet), I need it by TOMORROW at the latest.

Here's what we are up to this week:

Reading: We are wrapping up our focus on biographies and are comparing two biographies about the same person. As we meet in Reader's Workshop, we are having discussions about the value of reading more than one book about the same person. This is a great opportunity to follow up with your child at home-talk about experiences you have had doing research or simply learning about an important person.

Writing: We are continuing our unit on writing persuasive letters. This week, we will continue to study mentor texts and the parts of letters. We will also talk about what it means to persuade and how authors successfully present an argument in a letter.



Math: We are wrapping up our measurement unit this week! This has been a really fun, hands on unit and I am excited to see what the kids have learned the past few weeks. We will take our unit assessment tomorrow and will then jump into Geometry! Also, I will be giving our math facts check in assessment next week, so this is a great week to spend some time playing our APTT games.

Studies/Science: In connection to our trip to the building museum, we are learning about strong structures. We will launch our unit by reading "The Wonderful Towers of Watts," a true story about a man named Simon Rodia, who built the Watts Towers in Los Angeles. We will be studying structures over the next couple of weeks - students will eventually have the opportunity to make some structures of their own!

Thanks for all you do to support us in second grade. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best,

[Teacher]

PS: Come to the PTA Meeting this Thursday night! _____ will be talking about next year's budget, Common Core, and the PARCC test.



Created by Carly Fox

Email Template:

Copy and paste this template into a new email. Fill in the blanks, and it is ready to send!

Dear Families,

I hope this email finds you well. It is another busy week in _____.

Let's celebrate [student(s) or whole class] for _____. Wow! Keep up the great work!

In the classroom this week...

In Reading [fill in what students are working on in reading this week].

In Writing [fill in what students are working on this week].

In Math [fill in what students are working on this week].

In Science [fill in what students are working on this week].

In Social Studies [fill in what students are working on this week].

In (Other Subject) [fill in what students are working on this week].

The following events are happening at school this week:

Remember...

Please let me know if you have any questions about this week's updates. Thank you for everything you do to help your child to be successful. Here's to another great week in _____.

Thank you,

[Teacher]

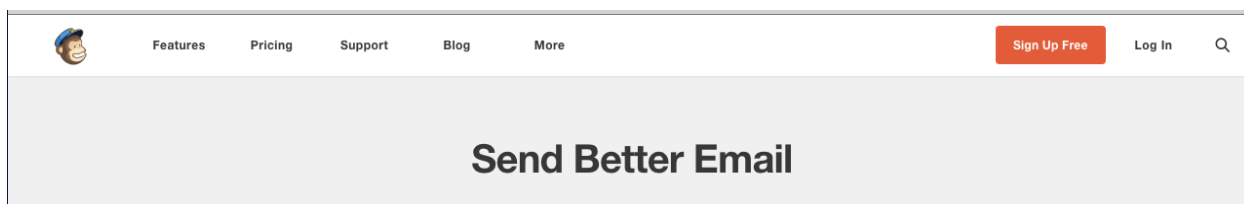
Using MailChimp

Another platform to send “mass emails” is [MailChimp](https://mailchimp.com). Teachers choosing to use MailChimp will need to set up an account and can create a mailing list using family email addresses. From there, the website provides many user-friendly templates that can be used to build a weekly update email.

One benefit to using MailChimp is the website’s feature that enables email tracking. The sender of the email can set preferences to receive different data points on the email. The data shows who opens the emails, who clicks on hyperlinks within the emails, and more. Using this data can help track which parents are reading these updates. Additionally, if families are not reading the emails, follow up conversations can ensure that they still feel informed. Perhaps their email address has changed, or they have not had internet access. Regardless of the reason, ensure that these families are still receiving classroom updates and information.

To create a MailChimp account:

- Go to the URL: www.mailchimp.com
- Signing up is free and easy! Click on the “Sign Up Free” button in the top right corner.



- Fill in your email address, create a username and password. Click “Create My Account”.
- Fill in the required sections. Note: If you do not have a classroom website, you can use your school’s website (ask your principal for permission).

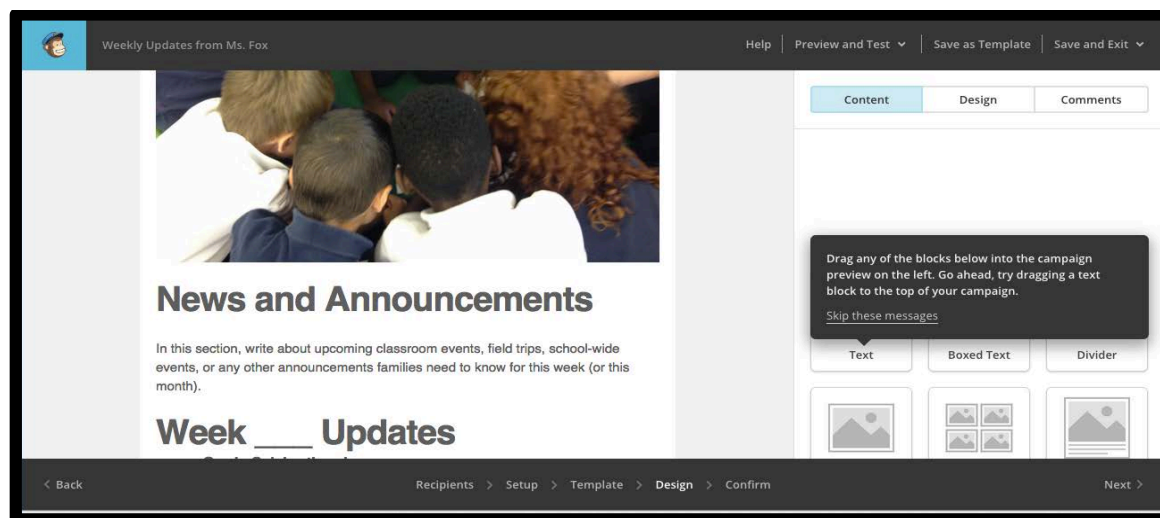
Once your account is created:

- From your “Dashboard,” you can take many actions
 - Import your contact list - this allows you to create a group, which makes sending mass emails easier.
 - Create and send a campaign - Mail Chimp refers to their emails as campaigns. Use their user-friendly templates to create an email. See above for ideas on important sections to include.

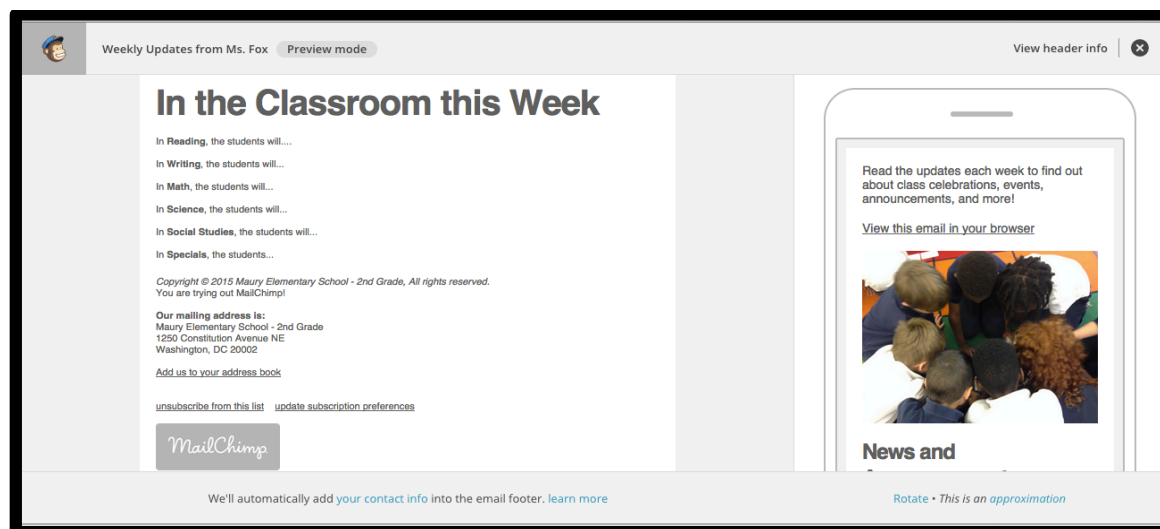
- Check out the many resource guides and videos throughout the website - these provide easy-to-follow instructions for ways the website can be used.

Samples:

This image shows the template teachers can use to create emails. Different formatting options are available. Users drag different blocks for text, images, titles, and more.



This image shows a sample email in preview mode. Teachers can view the email how their recipients will see it before sending it.





Created by Carly Fox

Family Feedback on Weekly Emails

The following are statements from families regarding the impact of sending weekly email updates:

"Consistent email is best. Kids aren't always the best at communicating what happened at school - even the victories - so hearing about things as real time as possible from the teacher is helpful. Also, updates on what they are learning and working on is helpful to be able to ask questions and draw out information from the student."

"Weekly emails were a beautiful touch a nice way to be sure that we were not missing any relevant information - assignments, field trips, reminders, etc."

