THE #FKLM FAMILY BLUEPRINT

Talking With Your Child's School

Educational & Scholarship Pathways · School Success

How caregivers and parents can open a clear, low-conflict line of communication with teachers and counselors.

IN THIS GUIDE

- Find out who your person is
- Introduce yourself before anything goes wrong
- Keep a record without keeping a file cabinet
- What to do when the tone goes wrong
- How much to tell the school
- Try it: a real example
- Scripts you can use

A free guide from My Fairy GodParents — for youth impacted by parental incarceration, justice-impacted youth, and the caregivers and families who support them.
myfairygodparents.org/resources/family-blueprint

Print, write on it, and share it with the people helping your family.

Talking With Your Child's School

Educational & Scholarship Pathways · School Success

> *How caregivers and parents can open a clear, low-conflict line of communication with teachers and counselors.*

THE DIFFERENCE THIS MAKES

Schools are large systems that respond to whoever shows up consistently. A student whose adults are visible gets flagged early when something slips; a student whose adults are silent is often assumed to be fine until a report card or a discipline referral says otherwise. That is not favoritism, it is triage — staff have hundreds of students and limited attention.

Families touched by incarceration are frequently the quietest families in the building, and usually for understandable reasons. Some caregivers worry that asking questions invites scrutiny of the household. Some are newly responsible for a child and do not know who to call. Some are exhausted. The result is the same: the child's needs stay invisible until they become a problem.

This lesson builds one clear line of contact between your household and the school. It takes about an hour of work in the first week and a few minutes a month after that. It does not require you to explain your family's private circumstances to anyone.

FIND OUT WHO YOUR PERSON IS

Every school has one staff member who is the practical hub for a given student. In elementary school it is usually the classroom teacher. In middle and high school it is usually the school counselor assigned by grade level or by last name. Front office staff can tell you who that is in about ninety seconds if you call and ask directly.

Ask three things on that call: who is my student's counselor, what is the best email address for that person, and how does the school prefer families to request a meeting. Write the answers down somewhere you will find them again — a note in your phone is enough.

If the school has an online portal for grades and attendance, ask how to get login credentials at the same time. Portals show you the same information staff see, which means you can spot a missing assignment or an attendance flag without needing to ask anyone.

+ INTRODUCE YOURSELF BEFORE ANYTHING GOES WRONG

The single highest-value action here is a short introduction email sent when nothing is wrong. It puts your name in the counselor's inbox as a cooperative adult rather than as an emergency, and it makes the next conversation dramatically easier.

The email needs four things and nothing more: who you are in relation to the student, that you are the day-to-day contact, the phone number and email that reach you fastest, and one sentence saying you want to be told early if anything comes up. You do not owe the school an explanation of why the household changed.

If a change in the household means a different adult now handles school matters, say only that — "I'm the adult managing school matters for Jordan this year" is complete and accurate. Schools work with kinship caregivers, grandparents, aunts, older siblings, and family friends constantly.

+ KEEP A RECORD WITHOUT KEEPING A FILE CABINET

Phone calls disappear. Email does not. The habit that protects families more than any other is following a phone conversation with a two-sentence email: what you discussed, what each person agreed to do. It is not adversarial, it is ordinary, and staff generally appreciate the clarity.

Keep those emails in one folder. Six months later, if there is a disagreement about what was promised — a support that never started, a meeting that never happened — you have a dated record rather than two different memories.

The same applies to anything the school gives you on paper: support plans, evaluation results, discipline notices, transcripts. Photograph them with your phone the day you receive them. A photo in your camera roll survives moves, floods, and lost backpacks better than paper does.

+ WHAT TO DO WHEN THE TONE GOES WRONG

Sometimes a conversation with a school turns defensive, particularly around discipline. The most useful move is to slow down and get specific: ask what exactly happened, what the school is proposing, what the timeline is, and what options the family has. Questions keep the conversation factual.

If a meeting feels one-sided, you can ask to bring another adult with you. A second person who takes notes changes the dynamic and costs the school nothing. You can also ask for anything discussed to be sent in writing.

Persistent problems have a next step above the counselor: an assistant principal, then a principal, then a district family-services or student-services office. Going one level at a time, in writing, is more effective than escalating immediately.

+ HOW MUCH TO TELL THE SCHOOL

Families ask this constantly, and there is no single right answer. Telling a trusted counselor that a parent is incarcerated can unlock real support: a check-in adult, flexibility during court dates or visits, a heads-up when a child seems off. Telling the wrong person can lead to assumptions the child has to carry.

A reasonable middle path is to disclose to one person, deliberately chosen, and to ask directly how that information will be recorded and who else will see it. Counselors answer that question honestly in most cases.

You can also request support without disclosing anything at all. "There has been a significant change at home this year and I'd like Jordan to have a check-in adult" is enough for most schools to act on.

+ ONE EMAIL, ONE CHANGED YEAR

An aunt became the day-to-day caregiver for her 12-year-old nephew in October, mid-semester, after his household changed suddenly. She had never spoken to the school. Her first instinct was to wait until something came up.

Instead she called the front office, learned the counselor's name, and sent a four-sentence email: she was the adult managing school matters, here was her cell and email, please contact her first, and she wanted to know early if anything slipped.

In January the counselor emailed her — not the other way around — about two missing assignments in one class before they became a failing grade. That email happened because there was a name and an address to send it to. The assignments were made up in a week.

+ WORDS YOU CAN USE

Introduction email to a counselor or teacher

Send in the first week of the school year, or the first week you become the day-to-day adult.

"Hello Ms. _____, I'm _____, the adult managing school matters for _____ (grade __) this year. The fastest way to reach me is _____ (cell) or this email. I'd like to be contacted early if anything comes up with grades, attendance, or how he's doing during the day — I'd much rather hear about a small thing now than a big one later. Thank you for what you do."

Requesting a meeting

When you want to sit down with a teacher or counselor, without stating a reason.

"Hi Ms. _____, could we schedule 15–20 minutes in the next week or two to talk about how _____ is doing? Mornings before 9 or after 3:30 work best on my end, but I can be flexible. A phone call works if that's easier than meeting in person."

Confirming a phone call in writing

Send within a day of any phone conversation with school staff.

"Thank you for the call this afternoon. Just to make sure I have it right: you'll _____ by _____, and I'll _____. If I've misunderstood anything, please let me know. Appreciate your time."

Asking for a check-in adult without disclosing details

Use when you want support for the student but do not want to explain the family's circumstances.

"There's been a significant change at home this year and _____ is carrying more than usual. I'm not looking to go into the details, but I'd like him to have one adult at school who checks in with him briefly each week. Is that something the counseling office can set up?"

+ SET UP YOUR LINE TO THE SCHOOL

- [ ] Call the front office and get the counselor's name and preferred email.
- [ ] Request login credentials for the online grade and attendance portal.
- [ ] Send a four-sentence introduction email with your best phone number.
- [ ] Create one email folder or phone album for all school correspondence.
- [ ] Photograph every school document the day you receive it.
- [ ] Decide, deliberately, whether to disclose family circumstances and to whom.
- [ ] Put one 15-minute check of the grade portal on your calendar each month.

+ REFLECT AND WRITE

Who is the one person at this school I would call first if something went wrong?

What would I want the school to tell me early, before it became serious?

Which adult at school does my student already trust?

+ YOUR NEXT STEP

Send one short introduction email to your child's counselor this week.

+ WHERE THIS COMES FROM

Written by My Fairy GodParents — reviewed August 2026.

This is general information and practice guidance — not legal advice, mental-health treatment, or a statement of any court, agency, or facility's rules. Policies differ by state, county, facility, school, and program, so always confirm details with the office involved.

For decisions with legal, medical, financial, or clinical consequences, work with a licensed professional or the organizations listed with each resource.

+

You do not have to do this alone.

More free guides, scripts, and checklists:
myfairygodparents.org/resources/family-blueprint