



Style Guide

Attleboro Public Schools

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Introduction

Why does style matter?

Welcome to the Attleboro Public Schools official Style Guide. While only a few may truly love the contents of a reference of this nature, almost everyone who works for and with our school district should enjoy its benefits, as communicating is central to the relational work we do. It is our sincere hope that you will find it both easy to use and helpful in your daily work.

This manual institutes a set of norms for the establishment and maintenance of a distinctive manner of expression for Attleboro Public Schools in all print and digital media materials. Improved communication is a critical strategy in our efforts to better engage our community in the ongoing endeavor to become its hub.

Branding is important. It is the frontline of the public's perception of the school district, and for many people the only basis for such. A cohesive set of stylistic choices presents a unified image of the district, its work, the people who comprise it, and those it serves. Style without substance is meaningless adornment, and the austere inverse is equally problematic. But our real concern emanates from the confusion created by the cacophony of stylistic choices made in an organization of this size and complexity in the absence of a clear vision for them.

The audience for this guide is all of those who speak on behalf of the organization, specifically the administration and their various support staff who aide in the district's communication. While not expressly required to adhere to contents here within, educators are encouraged to make use of it as we are all ambassadors of the district. The more we speak with one voice, the greater clarity our message will carry.



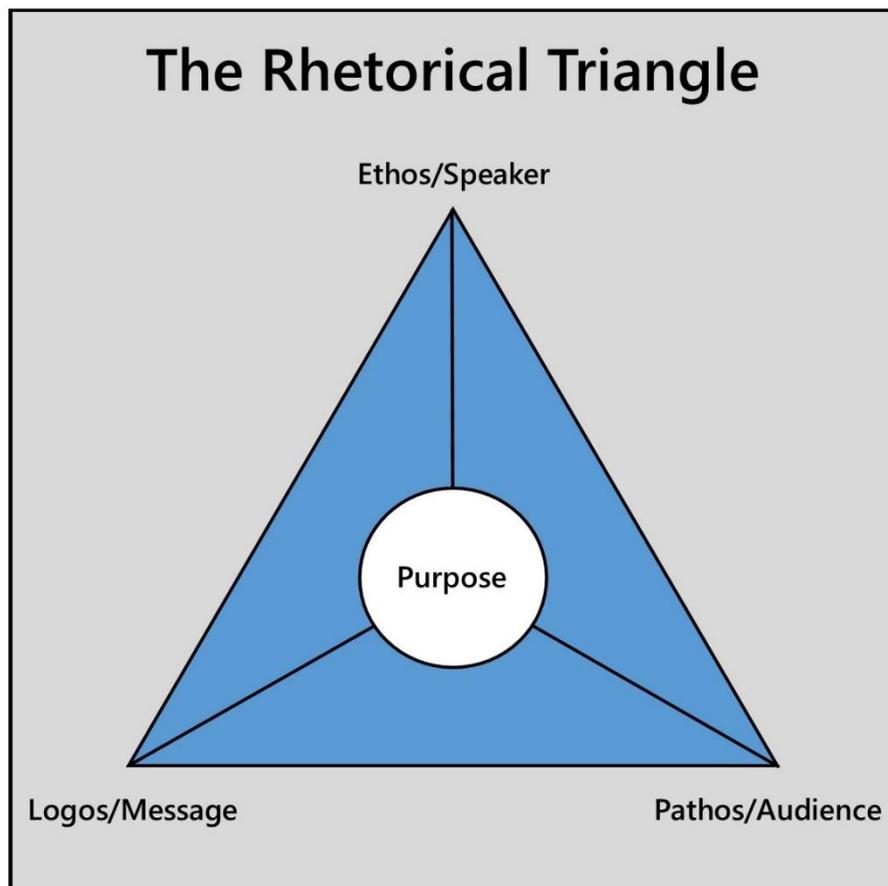
David A. Sawyer
Superintendent

Principles of Good Writing

The first principle of good writing is to decide, in fact, if the written word is the best form of communication. Often it is not. Sometimes a phone call or even face-to-face meeting is more appropriate, more difficult but more appropriate.

The written word is eternal; it lasts forever. As a public employee, you should keep in mind that any form of written communication could be consumed publicly. Imagining everything that you write as being printed in the newspaper is a realistic context in which to compose documents.

That said, the written word is an essential form of communication that is necessary for the Attleboro Public Schools to run smoothly. Thus, this Style Guide offers a set of principles related to good writing; these principles are designed to make communication clear and efficient. They are organized by the three points of Aristotle's rhetorical triangle: ethos, logos, and pathos.



Part I: Ethos/Speaker

When speakers or authors establish credibility, they create ethos. Ethos is largely connected to personal character and can be fortified through following principles of good writing. Building ethos (can take several hundred emails to the same audience and) can be done in these ways:

- Communicate conventionally and professionally. Start your message with a greeting, end with a closing that includes your name, and follow the [district's communication norms](#).
- Use standard English conventions. Adhere to appropriate grammar, usage, and mechanics norms.
 - Keep to one verb tense whenever possible. Use active voice.
 - Spell out numbers ten and under; use numerals for numbers 11 and higher.
 - Employ jargon or abbreviations only if they are known to your audience.
- Follow a familiar organizational structure that fits your purpose. Common patterns include:
 - Order of importance
 - Chronological order
 - Problem-solution
 - Question-answer
 - Point-counterpoint
 - Acknowledgement-validation-refutation
- Edit wisely. Follow Stephen King's rule: 2nd draft = 1st draft - 10%.
- Proofread.

Part II: Logos/Message

Translated from Greek, logos means logic. Writers who use logos employ facts and well-reasoned inferences to build an argument. Logical, fact-based messages are the ones most likely to be taken seriously.

- Use facts and data from credible sources to support claims.
- Infer rationally. Don't make broad leaps from evidence to claims.
- Be specific, accurate, precise; avoid stereotypes and generalizations.
 - Be concise. Omit needless words and avoid redundancy.
 - Example: I believe ~~the fact~~ that school starting at 7:15 ~~a.m. in the morning~~ makes it difficult for students to get a good night's sleep.
 - Avoid vague descriptors such as "at your earliest convenience" or "huge."

- Be cogent. Use the claim, data, because model to make your case. That is, have a clear “thesis” (claim) that is substantiated by data (evidence) that can be explained in a way (because) that supports the claim.
- Follow a logical continuum from one point to the next.
- Emphasize your key points through strategic repetition and placement. Bolding or highlighting essential information will make it easier for the reader to see.

Part III: Pathos/Audience

Pathos is the rhetorical appeal that taps into the emotions of your audience. When you deliver a message to a particular audience, you likely want them to feel a certain way (proud, indignant, excited, etc). Emotive, intense communication can be effective, but it can also be disingenuous or manipulative. These principles encourage efficacious, not manipulative, communication.

- Know your audience, occasion, subject, and purpose: who you are writing for, what the occasion is, and why you are writing about this subject.
- Don't assume.
- Select diction wisely. Words can evoke excitement or cause angst. Diction also creates tone. If writers feel that their diction could be misinterpreted, perhaps a well-placed emoji could clarify the equivocal communicate.
- Match tone and style to audience. Consider the following:
 - Paragraphing: each main idea warrants its own paragraph.
 - Listing: bullets or numbers may increase the audience's comprehension.
 - Brevity: succinct writing is more easily understood.

Digital Media

A Quick Guide to Professional Email Etiquette

Use Your Professional Email Address for All APS Correspondence

An example might go here...

Use a Formal Salutation

Professional correspondence should have a certain level of formality including a standard greeting. Unless you are invited to use a first name, it is best to address your recipient by his or her title, such as Dear Mr., Ms. or Professor.

Lead with a Clear Subject Line

A concise and specific subject line will help your reader know exactly what to expect.

Be Clear, Polite, and Succinct

Before sending, review your copy and make sure that it meets these criteria:

- It is written in complete, coherent sentences
- There are no spelling errors
- No part of it is written in all caps

Sign Off with a Thank You

It is common courtesy to thank someone for his or her time and help. End your email with a “thank you” or “best” and your full name.

Boost Your Image with a Strong Email Signature

Use the following guidelines when crafting your APS Email Signature:

- Include essential information such as your name, position, school and address
- Limit your signature to 3 or 4 lines. Use colons or pipes to separate.
- Include your preferred email address and phone number.
- Include links to your social media accounts such your school Facebook page or professional Twitter handle.
- Avoid fancy fonts, colors, graphics, and inspirational quotes.

Example:**Kelly J. Reed**

English Department Coordinator

Attleboro High School

100 Rathbun Willard Drive | Attleboro, MA 02703

Phone: 508.222.5150 x1297

www.mrsreedahs.weebly.com | [@ELAintheBORO](https://twitter.com/ELAintheBORO)

A Few Final Thoughts**Emails Are Forever**

You cannot take back what gets sent, and without a clear tone of voice, it can be easy to sound offensive. Read your message before you send it and keep in mind that some issues are better discussed in person. If it can't be wrapped up in a short paragraph, consider calling the relevant parties to discuss the matter at hand.

Patience Is a Virtue

We all like instant gratification, but everyone is busy and sometimes a reply takes more time than you'd hope. If your question or concern is time sensitive it may be appropriate to write a follow-up email, but be realistic about your expectations.

Practice Common Courtesy

If you expect timely, helpful replies, you should do the same for others. Check your email regularly, and respond as soon as you are able.

Hyperlinking

Hyperlinks are a fundamental element of any web page. They create paths for audiences to travel, not only across our website, but the entire World Wide Web. Hyperlinking is an important part of writing for the web and should be added in your copy wherever appropriate.

There are however, a few rules and conventions to follow.

What should be hyperlinked?

Hyperlinking is all about considering what information your audience is looking for and helping them to find it. If your audience may want to seek further information, based on what you have written, then you should provide them with a link to the relevant information.

What text should be linked?

Try to keep links brief but descriptive. The words you select can make a real difference.

When hyperlinking to new sites or documents, highlight the entire title of the site or document (including acronyms) you are linking to.

AVOID: "Click here..." links. Only hyperlinking these two words makes it difficult for users to scan for important hyperlinked content.

Bad Examples

- Register here: <https://www.luther.edu/writers-festival/register/>
- Register [here](#).

Good Example

- To register, fill out the [Luther College Writers Festival registration form](#).

Link shortening

For communications intended to be printed, use a link shortener (e.g. [goo.gl](#)) and/or a QR code (e.g. [QR Code Generator](#)).

Social Media

List of APS Schools and Official Social Media Accounts:

School Name	Facebook	Twitter
Attleboro Public Schools	https://www.facebook.com/attleboropublicschools/	@Attleboro_PS
Attleboro Community Academy	https://www.facebook.com/ACAprogam/	
Attleboro High School	https://www.facebook.com/AttleboroHighSchool/	@AHS_Bluepride
Brennan Middle School	https://www.facebook.com/brennanmiddleschool/	@attleboro_bms
Coelho Middle School	https://www.facebook.com/Robert-J-Coelho-Middle-School-729542527114679/	@Attleboro_CMS
Wamsutta Middle School	https://www.facebook.com/wamsuttamiddleschool/	@WamsuttaMS
Hyman Fine Elementary School	https://www.facebook.com/hymanfineelementary/	@Attleboro_HFES
Hill-Roberts Elementary School	https://www.facebook.com/hillrobertselementary/	@Attleboro_HRES
Studley Elementary School	https://www.facebook.com/studleyelementary/	@Attleboro_SES
Thacher Elementary School	https://www.facebook.com/thacherelementary/	@Attleboro_TES
Willett Elementary School	https://www.facebook.com/Thomas-Willett-Elementary-School-705561452825556/	@Attleboro_WES
Early Learning Center		

Social Media Guidelines for Staff

To use any online resource safely and responsibly, staff will follow the Guidelines outlined below:

- Staff will be responsible for their Attleboro School Account and/or computer network account.
- Staff can only link a professionally appropriate picture to their Attleboro account/network account. No other photograph will be authorized.
- Staff will not give their password to anyone; and will logoff of their APS account and/or network account when work is completed.
- Staff will be responsible for their language and only use appropriate language on the Internet and in their school e-mails.
- Staff will use computers and online resources to support their school work and not use their e-mail for personal use while class is in session.
- Staff may send e-mails (if applicable) to their students/parents/guardians only when it pertains to job; and always be mindful of what is being sent.
- Staff will be allowed to use these digital resources (including APS schools) outside of school but must follow the district rules when accessing their account and be mindful of what is being sent.
 - Staff will not write anything mean or hurtful to another person.
 - Staff will not be a bully or make fun of anyone.
 - Staff will not “bother” any person online or via e-mail.
 - Staff are encouraged tell an administrator if they see anything hurtful about another person online.

Staff will be respectful of themselves, their colleagues, and students when online.

- Staff will only look for webpages with pictures, words, or sounds that are school-appropriate.
- Staff will only look for webpages or documents which do not contain violent and/or sexual content.
- Staff will not write anything or post pictures or videos that are hurtful or embarrassing to anyone while online.
- Staff will not pretend to be anyone else online.
- Staff will not send e-mail, create an account, or post any words, pictures, or sounds using someone else’s name.

- Staff will not use another person's login or password.

Staff will not post any personal information about themselves or anyone else while online, such as: first and last name, photos, addresses, or schedules.

Staff understand how to be safe and responsible while using their school account and/or computer network account; and are aware of the potential consequences for not following these rules.

Staff must understand that school administration has access to any digital information that is sent, received, and/or stored on any school district account, hardware, or devices including: but not limited to emails, and that the information is subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Laws and should in no way be considered private.

Glossary of APS Terms

The Attleboro Public Schools (APS) promotes the effective use of writing through both instruction and practice. In attempting to navigate the challenges inherent in honoring the shifting norms of Standard Written English, APS attempts to strike a balance between the ongoing debates between prescriptive and descriptive approaches to language. The usage suggestions included within this style guide reflect organizational preferences concerning common choices facing writers in our shared context. For a broader perspective on writing decisions, APS endorses National Geographic Style Manual, an online resource guide covering a wider range of editorial concerns.

A

ACRONYMS - Acronyms are popular in education and can be helpful in eliminating the repetitive use cumbersome titles. Include the full name the first time it is used and introduce the acronym parenthetically immediately afterward. The acronym can then be used without parentheses thereafter. The first sentence in the introductory paragraph above provides an example. For a comprehensive list of acronyms used at APS and their definitions, consult Appendix A.

Administrative Assistant - A clerk whose duties include significant support for the administrator in a specific office.

Administrator - An educational leader who is responsible for the execution of all relevant laws, regulations, and policies in the supervision of assigned staff for the development of a culture focused on the attainment of educational outcomes for all students.

Assistant Principal - A building administrator who shares responsibilities with the Principal. Assistant Principal is preferred over Vice Principal, which connotes a merely disciplinary role.

Assistant Superintendent - A district administrator who shares responsibilities with the Superintendent.

B

Barbecue - See Cookout.

Breaks - The stacking of school vacation days and weekends to create extended period of rest from school. APS has five breaks: Thanksgiving, Holiday, February, April, and Summer.

C

Cookout - The preferred term for events that involve cooking and/or eating outdoors.

Clerk - Support staff member who performs clerical duties in support of the work completed in a specific office. The preferred title over Secretary. See Administrative Assistant.

Coordinator - An educator who leads collaboration in a specific field or program.

D

Dean - An educator who leads the delivery of programming and services for individual student success.

Director - A district educator who supports the execution of the Superintendent's duties.

E

Educator - A term inclusive of all roles and assignments that are directly involved in the service and support of students' educational needs.

F

Faculty - A term inclusive of all the teachers in a given unit of the organization. It excludes other educators and support personnel. See also Staff.

Families - Families is the preferred generic term in addressing households. It should replace parents, parents and guardians, or any other attempt to avoid excluding the various roles people serve as caregivers to our students.

G

Guardians - See Families.

H

Holiday - A day without school or work as dictated by law or policy.

I

Instructional Learning Aide (ILA) - See Paraprofessional.

L

Lead - An educator who that ensures a given group completes a specific set of responsibilities.

M

Manager - Staff member who executes the responsibilities associated with an identified aspect of the organization.

P

Paraprofessional - Educators who deliver instruction and services designed by certified teachers or specialists.

Parents - See Families.

Principal - The leader of a school by statutory authority.

PRONOUNS - In an effort to keep our language inclusive, writers should endeavor to avoid the use of pronouns where more specific terms can be used. However, sometimes the use of pronouns is unavoidable for clarity. In these cases, the third person plural pronoun "they/them/their" should be used regardless of the traditional convention of agreement in number.

S

School Names - All APS schools have three versions of their names as prescribed below:

School Name	Official School Name	Abbreviation
Attleboro Community Academy	Attleboro Community Academy	ACA
Attleboro High School	Attleboro High School	AHS
Brennan Middle School	Cyril K. Brennan Middle School	BMS
Coelho Middle School	Robert J. Coelho Middle School	CMS
Wamsutta Middle School	Wamsutta Middle School	WMS
Hyman Fine Elementary School	Hyman Fine Elementary School	HFES
Hill-Roberts Elementary School	Hill-Roberts Elementary School	HRES
Studley Elementary School	A. Irvin Studley Elementary School	SES
Thacher Elementary School	Peter Thacher Elementary School	TES
Willett Elementary School	Thomas Willett Elementary School	WES
Early Learning Center	Early Learning Center	ELC

Secretaries - See Clerk.

Staff - A term inclusive of all the employees assigned to given unit of the organization. See also Faculty.

V

Vacations - As the meaning for students and employees differs, the term should be avoided in most circumstances. For students, a vacation day is one without school that is not a holiday. These are potential work days for employees whose schedules are not commensurate with the school calendar. For employees, a vacation day, sometimes contractually identified differently (e.g. clerks have "Annual Leave"), is paid day without work that is not a holiday. See BREAKS.

Vice Principal - See Assistant Principal.

District Branding Guidelines

These logo guidelines are an attempt to market and brand individual schools in a manner that reflect their traditions and excellence. A consistency in logo and mark usage is a reflection of the professionalism of the school and is something to be taken seriously.

Only groups, team, clubs or organizations with a direct affiliation with the specific school are permitted to use the logo. All other organizations, merchandise or licensing must receive permission from the principal prior to usage. All external publications (including apparel) must bear one of the approved logos of the school.

Updated Guides will be Posted Soon...