

TIPS + TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES



*No matter what approach your school is taking to distance learning, make the effort to first connect with families before implementing learning goals. **Find out what your families' specific situations are during this time, and what their needs and goals are for their children. That information will drive what learning at home will look like.***

- **Start with a friendly connection.** Though you may have a lot of information to share, make a positive connection with the student or parent first. "I miss (student name)! How are you doing? What have you been doing during these days?"
- **Be prepared and be specific.** Know what questions you are going to ask ahead of time. Write them down so you can be sure to cover them all. Instead of asking, "What do you need?" Say, "I'm making sure all of our families know where they can get food assistance if they need it. Do you where you can go?" Or "Have you heard of the (insert your city's helpline here)?"
- **Ask about access to technology.** What technology does the student use at home? Is it a family computer, a phone, a tablet, and is it connected to the internet?
- **Ask what their preferred way to connect is.** Is it via text, phone, or email? If it's by phone, is there a preferred day or time for you to call them? Make a note of it.
- **Know available resources and share the information widely.** Whether you think a family needs a resource or not, it's always a good idea to share information widely, in the case someone does not want to ask. You can say, "We want to make sure all of our families know about a few services available right now. Do you mind if I share them with you?"
- **For privacy, get a new, local phone number if you need one.** For your privacy, and to get a local number that can be recognizable by families, use a free service like [Google Voice](#) to get a phone number you can use for school communication.
- **Log your communication.** Use a [communication log](#) to keep track of who you have talked to, and any questions you need to follow up on.

Tools for Connecting With Families of English Learners

Ideally, you can ask your school or district translators to help you connect with your English Learner families. If this is not an option, here are a few tools you can use to communicate more effectively.

- [WhatsApp](#) - Families that are hard to reach may be found on this app. This is a popular app with immigrant families as it can be used for international messaging and calls.
- For translation help, you can try [Talking Points](#), an app that supports two-way communication in multiple home languages, and can be used via text or web browser. Other options are [Microsoft Translator](#), [Google Translate](#), and [Read&Write for Google Chrome](#).