

Proactive Tips for Communicating With Students' Families

Communication is an important factor when supporting the transition for students from the school setting to an after-school setting. To start, here is a list of digital tools that can help enhance and streamline communication between school and home.

Applications (Apps): Here are three popular communication tools used by educators to initiate two-way conversations, share important information, and help support family engagement.

1. Remind: A communication platform that provides easy communication in real time (remind.com)
2. Talking Points: A messenger tool that can auto-translate messages into over 100 different languages (talkingpts.org)
3. ClassTag: A messaging tool for easy scheduling of conversations or conferences (classtag.com)

Smore.com: This site provides templates for newsletters.

Social media: Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are platforms that can be used to share information in real time with families.

Important: Before choosing a digital tool or social media platform, be sure and check your school's communication guidelines and review your school's social media policies. This will help guide your decision on which resource might be best for you.

When you have determined a communication plan that best fits your needs and the needs of the families you work with, share the plan with them, along with guidelines for the successful use of the communication tools. Consider too that we all have different comfort levels and skills related to the use of technology, so be sure to plan how you might support your students' families to ensure that all are comfortable with the digital tools used.

Here are some tips when sharing a communication tool and plan with families:

1. Share your hours of availability. Let families know when you will be able to respond to their messages and how long it might take to receive a response from you.
2. Clearly communicate where important class information can be found on the school website and on your class's web page.
3. Send a screenshot or video of the important features of any digital tool that families might need to use.
4. Consider rolling out the various features of the digital tool throughout the year, rather than all features at the same time.
5. Clearly explain the tool's purpose and how to use it effectively use.
6. Be consistent and chose one communication tool.