

# Idaho State Department of Education

## COVID-19: Best Practices for Communicating with Parents



Districts, schools, and teachers must have a clear, consistent, concise, and accessible communication plan that prioritizes student connection to trusted school personnel. Family access to information is imperative in a remote learning context. The best practices below provide considerations that schools should review in communicating to families about remote learning. All expectations for staff communication with students during remote learning should be determined in accordance with local policies.

### General Guidelines

- If possible, use communication platforms stakeholders are already familiar with and that currently exist in the system
- Be clear, consistent, and concise
- Ensure that materials and communications are provided in a way that is accessible to students with language needs
- Encourage/maintain ongoing two-way communication
- Clearly define terms/ideas to avoid miscommunication
- Set guidelines for expectations related to response time from educators and students and communicate these expectations to all stakeholders

### Communicate your communication plan

Most schools have established effective communication methods and strategies with students, parents, and families. During the period of extended closures, school administrators and teachers can build upon these established tools to strengthen personal connection. Parents and students will appreciate knowing what to expect from the district, school, and classroom teacher for future correspondence.

**Example:** Developing a regular communications schedule to provide a consistent presence for families during this disruptive time. Consider the mode(s) of communication to implement regarding the purpose of the message. This may include the following:

- **Text Messaging – reserved to communicate immediate or critical information**
  - action items that require quick response or attention
  - food services availability or system down time for online classes
- **Emails – reserved to inform expectations or goals for the upcoming week**
  - Superintendent or principal communication to parents/families relaying parents can expect a phone call from elementary classroom teachers or secondary homeroom teachers as a check-in system
  - Parent/Family Survey – assist the school in building level of awareness to the needs of individual students and families
- **Social Media - Twitter/Facebook etc. Used to communicate light-hearted material to engage parents/families and students**

- Science Club advisor posts a fun activity to do at home
- Elementary PE teacher provides a daily or weekly activity challenge
- Website Updates – posted frequently or as necessary
  - Consider an approach for parents/families to submit questions
  - Post FAQ's on the website regularly
  - Create a list of contacts who students and parents/families may consult for support during the extended closure
    - provide current contact phone numbers and emails for counselors and student support services
    - secondary level – include students in communication plan to help them navigate personal needed assistance (food, clothing, housing)

**Family engagement activities are encouraged to promote the continuity of community.** *Students and families need to know that they can rely on their school to be the consistent force where everyone works together to promote social-emotional health and academic success.*

**Example:** Creating purposeful rapport and/or relationship building opportunities will provide the ability for school administrators and teachers to make a powerful impact. This may include the following:

- **Virtual/Video Interaction – (Elementary)**
  - School Principal reading bedtime stories – “Tucked in Tuesdays”
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsQHf7mhKTA>
    - can be effective with school administrators and classroom teachers as daily or weekly check-ins with students and families
- **Virtual/Video Interaction – (Secondary)**
  - School Principal or school counselor providing college and/or technical readiness weekly tips which could include
    - scholarship/FASA information
    - summer internship/job employment
    - steps to complete a trade school or college application
    - career interest survey
- **Virtual/Video Interaction – (K-12)**
  - Special interest/activities
    - yoga, meditation, healthy living
    - STEAM – Chess Club, CTE instruction
    - Sports/Physical Activity – guided weight training and conditioning
    - Cooking Class – share your favorite meals with step by step instructions that includes budget friendly and easy to replicate healthy meals for families
    - Spirit Week – engage in specific activities reserved for each day of the week and share on school Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter accounts

Please contact Jill Mathews if you have questions or would like more ideas to support your communication strategies [jmathews@sde.idaho.gov](mailto:jmathews@sde.idaho.gov).