

FAQ on State and District Response to COVID-19 Outbreak

How are districts communicating with families about student progress?

Regional Educational
Laboratory
Northeast & Islands

From the National Center for Education Evaluation at IES

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- New York City schools replaced in-person parent-teacher conferences with [video conferences](#) and phone calls.
- Sarasota County School District in Florida is requiring teachers to hold “[office hours](#),” where they are available to both students and parents to discuss a variety of concerns, including student progress. Teachers communicate via Zoom, Google Voice, email, or a traditional phone call.
- A [blog post](#) written by Danielle Martin, a middle school teacher located in Seattle, highlights six strategies for communicating student progress to parents. Many of these strategies could be helpful as schools transition to distance learning, including creating student portfolios, planning to make phone calls home, emailing student progress reports, and having students practice self-monitoring.
- In [Remote Learning: Recommendations During COVID-19 Emergency](#), the Illinois State Board of Education identifies guidelines for teachers and administrators when engaging with families, which include:
 - Communicate regularly using consistent methods, such as phone calls or online conversations in the evenings. This approach helps family members to become comfortable with your method of communication.
 - Avoid using educational jargon when speaking with family members. If you need to use a term that may not be familiar to your audience, define it for them to ensure you are both on the same page.
 - When possible, communicate with families using their preferred language. Call on paraprofessionals, multilingual staff, translation services, and any other resources available to you to help reduce language barriers.
 - Speak with families about your expectations for students. As part of those conversations, ask parents how they can help to support their student’s success.
 - Offer recommendations about how families can support the whole child, including connecting families with educational and social and emotional supports available to them in the school and community.
- In [Distance Learning for All](#), the Oregon Department of Education offers guidance to engage parents, families and caregivers as critical partners and co-facilitators of learning. These guidelines include:
 - When communicating with families, consider each families’ home language and culture as well as the strengths and needs of their student.
 - Let families know that the district’s distance learning model will not be perfect, but reassure them that changes will occur and it will improve over time.

- Ensure that families understand routines and school structures for the remainder of the year. As part of this conversation, highlight supplemental learning resources, how to access meals, and what community supports and services are available to families.
- Families are experiencing this crisis in many different ways and may have a variety of needs. Seek outside resources, including community liaisons and community-based organizations, to help personalize and contextualize support.

Related links

- <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/ny-school-parent-conferneces-20200310-wuuep3w45rfvpeqwr6icspoh3q-story.html>
- https://www.yoursun.com/westvillagesun/what-you-need-to-know-about-sarasota-countys-school-plan/article_48279bac-72cb-11ea-861d-473a561c29fb.html
- <https://www.adoptaclassroom.org/2019/03/11/six-tips-for-communicating-student-progress-to-parents/>
- <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/RL-Recommendations-3-27-20.pdf>
- <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Distance%20Learning%20for%20All%20Guidance%20March%202020.pdf>

April 24, 2020

This document was prepared under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0008 by Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands, administered by Education Development Center. The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.