

# Webinar: Engaging Parents and Students from Diverse Populations in the Context of Distance Learning

Supporting children in grades k-12

A Publication From Regional Educational Laboratory West at IES

To access the RELs' evidence-based COVID-19 response resources, visit <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/covid-19>.



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**Primary Audience:** School Leaders      **Secondary Audiences:** Teachers and Superintendents/Assistant Superintendents

Effective student and family engagement relies on establishing trusting relationships in which educators, students, and their parents see themselves and each other as equal partners. Without opportunities to interact in person, it is now more difficult and also more important to build and maintain these strong relationships.

This Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) West webinar highlights lessons from research and practice to help educators engage with students and their families, particularly those among vulnerable populations, to support continued learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Promising Strategies

### Strategies for engaging with families and caregivers:

- Cultivate a partnership orientation.
- Take an asset-based approach to working with students and their families.
- Build relationships based on trust and respect.
- Establish two-way communication.
- Build the capacity of educators *and* families.

### Strategies for engaging students in distance learning:

- Focus on developing an online learning culture.
- Gather and respond to information about student learning and well-being.
- Create transparency in learning (for example, making learning goals explicit and sharing challenges).
- Support student learner identity.
- Engage peers in supporting one another in learning.

### Lessons learned from practice:

- Focus on student and family well-being first. Learning won't happen in the absence of safety and having basic needs met.
- Leverage critical community partners and staff including community-based organizations.
- Strong relationships and clear communication with families and students are key.
- Support families with appropriate resources at the appropriate times (for example, food, devices, Wi-Fi).
- Build the capacity of all staff to engage with families.

## Questions to Consider



- How can you work with community partners to meet the basic needs of students and their families?
- How are you leveraging existing relationships and networks to stay in touch with students and their families?
- What shifts can you make to better support students' engagement in distance learning (for example, more feedback and less grading, more self-directed learning opportunities and less direct instruction, reinforcing prior learning and not introducing new content)?
- Are district and/or school staff regularly checking in on students' well-being?

## Related Resources



- [The Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships](#)
- California Department of Education's [Family Engagement Toolkit](#)
- REL Pacific 4-part toolkit: [Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education](#)
- REL Northeast & Island's FAQ response: [How Can Educators and Families Support Students' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Needs?](#)

The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences funds a network of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs). Each REL serves a designated region of the country and works in partnership with educators and policymakers with a mission of supporting a more evidence-based education system to improve outcomes for students. In response to the impact of COVID-19 on education systems, the RELs collaborated to produce evidence-based resources and guidance.

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