



Ideas for Connecting with Diverse Families of Young Children in Difficult Times: Effective Learning Support

1

Language

Identify the language of each family and provide access and support to every one - not just one or two languages. Partner with other programs to share translations. If you purchased a messaging platform or other media, ask the company to help you make it work for all families. Advocate for government agencies to support more languages.

2

Environments

Families may live in small spaces with little privacy, or work multiple shifts, or move from place to place. Rural families or families in Tribal communities may have different access and information needs than urban or suburban families. Adjust expectations and offer a variety of responsive supports so no one gets left behind. Invite families, staff, and community members to offer input to decision-making processes.

3

Pictures

Communicate with pictures. When it is hard to reach some families or hard to overcome barriers, build positive rapport by sharing photos of their children. Use photos or videos of the steps needed to sign on for virtual learning or text updates. Reduce the number of words. Invite families to send photos to you, also, to build relationships.

4

Media options

Some families will appreciate text messaging programs. Others need a recorded voice message. Some need an email or paper mail they can show to a helper. When families don't respond, make the effort to find out why and how a change of medium might support your 2-way messages.

5

Ambassadors

Community members can be ambassadors to help families cope with crisis and support their child's learning. Experienced bilingual families can reach out to peers. Send information to community members like churches, clinics, libraries, and social service agencies so families can get accessible, in-person support to sign on, support learning, recover from trauma.

6

All families

Messaging can be more inclusive when we let go of terms like "parents", "mom" or "dad". One program tells children to "ask their grown-ups for help." With so many difficult situations surrounding young children, we should respect whoever is caring for them and helping them learn. No caregiver should feel less valued than another in difficult times.

7

Proactive plans

Take a universal design approach to plans for in-person and virtual learning for children, and for supporting families through difficult times. That means planning ahead with multiple options for times, languages, media, materials, and activities.

8

Personalizations

Recognize each individual's strengths and needs. Create flexible plans and expectations to meet them where they are. Include examples that are relatable and culturally relevant to each learner. Now, more than ever, personalized learning is needed to make sure every child and family gets what they need.

9

Racial equities

Bias can appear in many ways. Difficult times and separations can amplify biases. To avoid letting assumptions about a group replace actual knowledge about an individual child or family, work with others in positive ways to see and fix racial inequities to improve supports for learning.

10

Educator supports

So much change and so many different demands are being faced by everyone who works with children. Each of us has our own concerns as well. Build in plenty of support for teachers, assistants, substitutes, and other staff so they can make it all work. Most importantly, they all need to be heard.