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OUTREACH TIPS FOR ENGAGING FAMILIES

Connecting with families to understand technology access can be challenging. Here are our top tips for communicating with them.

1 | SHARE THE VALUE PROPOSITION UPFRONT

You are reaching out because you want to make sure every family has what they need to ensure e-learning is a success. When families ask why you are collecting this data, remember to share why it's essential to understand their technology and how it can help their students.

We suggest a short, clear statement, such as:

> "**We want to make sure your family and [student name] is set up to be successful. We're collecting answers to provide devices and the Internet to students. This is important because some classes may be online in the fall, and we want to make sure everyone can learn outside of the classroom.**"

2 | WORK WITH CALLERS WHO UNDERSTAND LOCAL CONTEXT AND FAMILIES

It's a lot easier for callers familiar with local context or who already know many of the school district's families to communicate this message such as teachers, administrative staff, or parent volunteers. This helps to immediately establish trust and gather information more effectively. For example, Atlanta Public Schools successfully and quickly contacted families by engaging social workers and community volunteers because they were already familiar with many of the families they were trying to contact.

3 | CONSIDER THE TIME OF DAY

Timing can be tricky - with work schedules and other family obligations; families might be better able to talk in the morning or evening. For example, if you have trouble connecting with families in the morning, try back later that afternoon or evening.

4 | TRY CALLING BACK IMMEDIATELY

We all screen our calls in fear of marketing or robocalls. By calling back a number that went to voicemail, you are potentially reassuring a skeptical family that it is a real person trying to contact them for an important reason!

5 | "MEET" FAMILIES WHERE THEY ARE

While we cannot meet families in person, we can meet them virtually! Reflect on how you have successfully communicated with parents in the past. If you have strong social media channels, a messaging application, or receive excellent feedback via email, consider using those methods to contact families. Or use those channels to give them a heads up that they should expect a call in the outreach campaign timeframe. They may be more comfortable communicating if they are already familiar with the platform or have been given the heads up by the school district.

6 | SET UP A CALL-BACK TIME

If someone answers the phone and says it is not a good time to talk, consider inquiring about a better time to call back and confirm that future time. Be sure to follow up!

7 | LEAVE A CALL-BACK NUMBER IN YOUR VOICEMAIL

If you cannot reach the intended contact, always leave a call-back number in your voicemail and let them know you will be calling back soon to follow up! Remember to speak clearly and at a moderate pace to ensure they have enough time to write (or type) your number down.

8 | KEEP IT SHORT AND SIMPLE

Many families are not overly technical. We suggest keeping terms simple and clear. For example, use terms such as "Wi-Fi" or "Internet" instead of "broadband." If they are still unsure of the answers, consider asking whether someone in the household might help answer the questions. In our work with school districts, we've found that some parents pass the phone to an older child to help, who has been very helpful in gathering the answers!
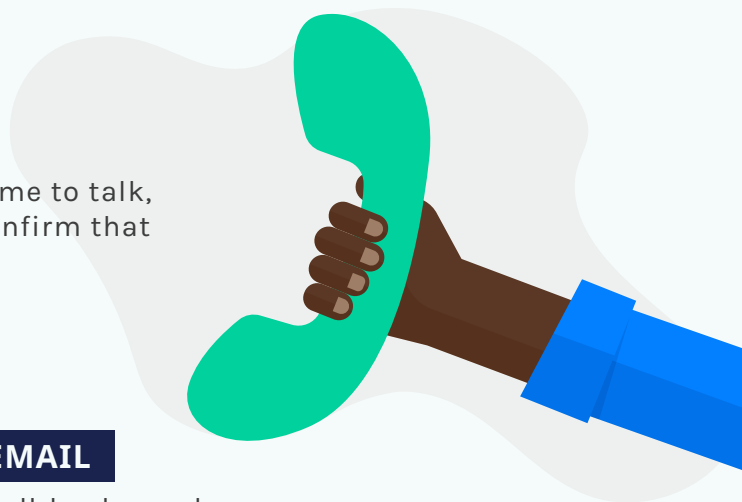
9 | IT'S OKAY TO GO OFF SCRIPT

While we prepared a phone and voicemail script (in English and Spanish) for your use, we understand that you know these families best! Feel free to adjust the conversation and tone as you see fit.

10 | TONE IS EVERYTHING

This outreach is an opportunity to assess the technology needs of families and build relationships and trust. We suggest approaching these conversations with patience and empathy to show that you are reaching out because you care. Most importantly, remember to be upfront about your reasons for calling. Families will understand that even if you do not have a perfect internet or device solution yet, you are working to make their children's next school year a success.

11 | SET UP EXPECTATIONS IF YOU CAN

Try to set expectations with the families about your school district's next steps when possible. This shows the families that you respect their time and are genuinely working to address their challenges. If you know that devices are going out to those in need in the next month, say so. Or if the Technology Department is going to follow-up with all families struggling with Internet access next week, share the timeline!

Do you have tips from your outreach to families?
Share them with our team by emailing Greer Ahlquist or Tweet them to us @EdSuperHighway.
For more resources, visit our **Home Access Needs Assessment Playbook.**