



## Connecting with families when it's more important than ever

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**Link to slides:** <https://learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Webinar-9-3-20.pdf>

### Contact info for the panelists:

- Oscar Harris [oscarh@spokaneschools.org](mailto:oscarh@spokaneschools.org)
- Tunette Powell [@TunettePowell](https://twitter.com/TunettePowell)
- Christina Armas [christina2686@gmail.com](mailto:christina2686@gmail.com)

### Resources and links from the panelists:

*From Oscar Harris:*

- [Epstein framework from National Network of Partnership Schools](#)

*From Tunette Powell:*

- [Racial Realist Parent Involvement: A Critical Race Multicase Study of Black Parents' School Engagement Narratives](#)

*From Christina Armas:*

- [Article: "During remote learning, parents became my co-teachers. Now, I want to keep that partnership going"](#)

### Learning Forward resources:

- [August issue of \*The Learning Professional\*: Turning to technology](#)
- [COVID-19 online resource page](#)
- [Learning Forward webinars](#)
- [Learning Forward blog](#)
- [Learning Forward membership](#)
- [2020 Virtual Annual Conference – Registration NOW OPEN](#)

**Poll results:**

**1. How many families were you able to talk to during spring remote learning?**

Most or all of my students' families (27) 25%

More than half of my student's families (36) 33%

About a quarter to a half of students' families (22) 20%

Fewer than a quarter students' families (25) 23%

**2. What was the most common topic you discussed with families?**

Basic needs such as food and housing (17) 15%

Access to computers and/or internet (30) 27%

Other tech troubleshooting (8) 7%

Content such as math and reading (9) 8%

Student academic progress (5) 5%

Students' social and emotional needs (19) 17%

General check-in (22) 20%

**Participants' suggestions and resources:**

- It's also important to note that if you haven't built relationships, it won't matter how many different options you have for meeting times. CONNECTION! That's the key.
- Number one thing I hear from parents: Tell them to talk to us plainly. Don't use big words and acronyms. Important to remember that.
- The way we use words is very important as to how we build trust with our families!
- When schools are back open - I challenge schools to think about having meetings outside of schools... have meetings in other community spaces.
- Having family training for remote learning is a must. Families are overwhelmed. Here in Boston we have a parent coordinator too. Now they have many courses for families and the platform they are going to be using. Its call Parent University... parent sign-up for any type of support.
- Relationships are the most important. So, you as a teacher need to do your homework before talking to the family, speak to the teacher that taught them the year prior, and find out a little about the family.
- The St. Croix District in the United States Virgin Islands had Parent University for several years prior to the Hurrricanes of 2017 and it was very successful.
- Many teachers in Boston are doing virtual family visits.
- It's about choosing the correct words. Families are always willing it's how you sell it to the families.
- Local organizations are so ready to reach out! Please reach out to them. The Community Groups want to serve!

**Participants' responses to panelists' comments and strategies:**

- Authentic, real, honest connections matter.
- Building relations is very important! Especially with our families!
- Families bring so much to the table of teaching and learning; our students are nested in context of family unit and distance learning pushes us to consider the family unit in the space of supporting learning.
- Listen, learn & co-lead.
- Relationships are critical...
- I love the reminders of how importance relationships are. You have to have those relationships with others (students, staff, parents etc.) before we can think about content.
- If parents feel you are doing right by their student, you can truly earn their respect!



- Schools can't do it alone! We need to create groups within our school communities with other partners to develop an outreach and connection plan. So, it might be door to door for some families; it might be phone calls; it might focus groups or village sessions, etc.
- Authenticity and humility are so important.
- Using education jargon that parents are unfamiliar with can create a divide.
- Schools are not always places where families feel comfortable.
- A school is not only a school but also a family community.
- Surveillance leads to distrust; these aren't ordinary times.
- Trust is the key... to everything.