

ONGOING COMMUNICATION

BEST PRACTICES

Strong relationships between educators and families are built over time. One successful welcome call or home visit may lay the foundations of trust, but it is through ongoing communication and shared power that trust is sustained, relationships are maintained, and families have the tools they need to play [The Five Roles](#) that accelerate student learning. Ongoing communication can take many forms – emails, phone calls, text messages, classroom management apps (e.g., ClassDojo, Remind, etc.), notes sent home, and more – and should incorporate a few key components. **Ongoing Communication should be:**



POSITIVE

- Use positive interactions to build goodwill, rapport, trust, and to show you care for your students beyond academic or behavior concerns.
- Maintain a good balance of positive and constructive feedback when communicating with families.



FREQUENT + CONSISTENT

- Keep families up to date on what's happening in the classroom and with their student.
- Families should know when/how to expect communication from you, this is especially important in early days to build trust and reliability.



DIFFERENTIATED

- Ask the family's preferences around communication and follow them!
 - If they don't have a preference, offer yours and ask how that works for them.
- Utilize translation resources to ensure your communication is in the language families prefer.



TWO-WAY

- Communication should include an opportunity for engagement or response.
 - Families may choose not to respond, but they should be given the opportunity to engage.
- If/when families give you feedback, incorporate that into your communication with them.



STUDENT-CENTERED

- Focus on the student themselves, not just logistics or the class as a whole.
- Be specific! Don't just say, "It was a good day" — give reasons (and where appropriate, photos) that illustrate how/why it was good.

Bonus tips for communicating with Alaska Families

Alaskan families have a wide range of cultural backgrounds and experiences with school. Some have had traumatic experiences with boarding schools and other policies designed to reinforce inequalities. Here are some additional tips for connecting with Alaskan families.

- **Join families at their table:** While it may be convenient to invite families to the school, it is not always possible or comfortable for families to be in that space. Consider communication strategies that go beyond the school walls and consider joining families at ball games or community events, and scheduling home visits.
- **Start in-person:** Apps and emails can make it easy to communicate, but it can be easier to build relationships if you can first meet families in-person. It can also help to meet in-person when talking about certain topics (either to celebrate or to troubleshoot).
- **Listen deeply:** Take time to listen when families are interacting with you or sharing information about their child. Pay attention to body language and other non-verbal signals in addition to what is written and said. Families may not always use direct communication, but when they do it is important to listen without judgment or interruption and to follow up on the information shared.
- **Learn more:** If you are having trouble connecting with a family, ask a trusted colleague or community member for how you might modify your approach. If you are not familiar with Alaska's history of boarding schools and other educational policies on families, learn more from sources like the Alaska Native Heritage Center.

Tip: Want to make sure your emails are easy for families to read?

Try [http:// writingforbusy readers.com/ai/](http://writingforbusyreaders.com/ai/)



**ALASKA FAMILY
ENGAGEMENT CENTER**