

Tips for Teachers

Maintaining Relationships of Trust in a Time of Social Distancing

We know from both experience and from research that relationships of trust make a big impact on students, families, and teachers. But in these unprecedented times of COVID-19, social distancing, and school closures, how can these relationships continue to be nurtured? At a time when we must be physically distant, how do we maintain the relational ties that matter so much? Some of Parent Teacher Home Visits' (PTHV's) time-tested principles can be applied to our current reality with some critical tweaks to make sure we support the health and well-being of our communities.

1. **Connect with Families - Remotely.** Even though we cannot visit in person, our children, families, and teachers still need each other's support – perhaps now more than ever.

Action: Try doing a video chat or make a phone call to the family to check in for 5-10 minutes, or mail a card or note to remind the family and student that you care and are thinking about them.

2. **Hopes and Dreams.** Think back to all those “Hopes and Dreams” conversations you've had with families. Getting grounded in your “why” will help carry you through this challenging period of time.

Action: Do you have home visit selfies stored in your phone? Text them to the families with your memory of the hopes and dreams you talked about during your home visit. Even if you don't have the photo, text the hopes and dreams message.

3. **Be a Co-Educator.** Families have abruptly been thrown into the role of home schoolers. Think about how you can best support them with academic, health, wellness, or other resources.

Action: Don't know how to best support families? Ask them. Reach out to find out what kind of resources they might need. Have your school district's guidelines for local resources available. Send them 1-2 tools that will support the academic, social, and/or emotional development of their children – or some activities that will keep their kids' boredom at bay!

4. **Check Your Assumptions and Be Gentle.** Each of us is handling this pandemic in our own way. Remember to focus on the home culture of each family – the wisdom, assets, challenges, and experiences that is unique to each family.

Action: Take some time to reflect on any assumptions you might be carrying about how families “should” be educating or caring for their children during isolation. Then remind yourself that we are all doing the best we can in a seriously imperfect world. So be gentle on yourself and on families.