

SMS Surveys and Individual Outreach

KIPP Colorado Schools-Northeast

Denver, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education



During the 20-21 school year, KIPP Colorado Schools-Northeast found new opportunities to engage families in their students' education from home. Two specific ways to do this were text surveys and individual phone calls and cards. The goal of the surveys is to make feedback accessible to every families. Even if a smartphone is not available, most families can receive short text service messages (SMS) on their mobile phones. KIPP administrators used Possip to regularly communicate with families. The SMS simply asks "Are you happy with (Name of School)? Reply: Yes, Mostly, or No". If a parent responds they get a follow up SMS, "What praise, ideas, or questions do you have at this time?" This information is relayed back to the school for review. This first question is great to just get a pulse check on how families are feeling overall.

The goal of individual outreach is to ensure that families feel connected and valued at their children's school and to meet parent leaders. Regional engagement coordinators (REC) and family leaders are involved in the individual outreach to families. This process starts with schools providing the REC twenty randomly selected families. The REC then works with the family leaders to determine how many parents/guardians they want to call and write to. Phone calls can last anywhere from five minutes to fifteen minutes. Pre and post conversation notes take an additional five to ten minutes per call. The average number of parents/guardians given to each family leader to call is seven. Family representatives have a phone call guideline to help them document and be consistent in their phone calls. Principals assign time during regular meetings to review the Possip results with their leadership staff. From these meetings different teams work on addressing any concerns or receive praise from the comments of their families.

Individual phone calls are collected using a Google form. These phone calls help create a one-to-one connect with families and their family representatives. Most phone calls resulted in open conversation and a deeper insight to any possible resources the family might need. Communication with families is a topic that both principals and family leaders wanted to explore.

Individual phone calls are reviewed with family leaders and principals during the family council and principal quarterly meeting. However, if during a phone call a timely item is shared, then an email is sent to the principal for immediate action. Despite the guideline document, time to practice with the REC and only seven phone calls per parent representative, not every phone call was made. Most parent leaders report 'not having the time to make the phone call.' When given the option, most prefer to write a card to their list of parents/guardians. The downside of this is the loss of feedback.

SMS surveys are a simple and quick way to engage families. Make sure to call attention to this tool during registration, family meetings and parent teacher conferences. Coordinate the delivery of the survey during a school event, and then announce it for families to respond in the moment.

It can be hard to carve out additional time to make one-to-one phone calls or cards to families. It is such a powerful tool to making families feel special and should be used by family leaders and staff. Schedule fifteen to twenty minutes during monthly family meetings and staff meetings to demonstrate a call and then have everyone in the room complete at least two to three calls or cards to families. Provide them the names, contact info, cell phones or cards.

Essential Element 2—Building Trusting Relationships
Standard 2—Communicating Effectively