

Communicating with families in multiple languages

1

Find out the languages spoken by the children and their parents

Every school should gather information about the languages spoken in the homes of their pupils. This is important because it is common for children to come from homes where two or more languages are spoken. Some of these languages may not be written, or parents may not be literate, so the more information you have the better, because this can inform your actions, especially in an emergency situation.

2

Know what works best for the hard to reach families

Bilingual families may need updates about school in a language they understand. It is good practice to offer every family a list of key messages about school routines and expectations for the children in a language they understand. Especially when working online it is important to outline expectations and roles in the child's learning.

Translations of common school messages in Albanian, Arabic, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish are available here:

<https://www.tcd.ie/Education/research/Multilingual-Families/>

Interactive version available here:

<https://languageexplorers.eu/communicating-with-families-in-their-mother-tongue/>

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Find out the best channels for communicating with each family

This does not mean that you have to constantly use many means of communication, but it can be very helpful to have the information at hand when you find that some parents have not been able to contact you or vice versa. **Think about the language barriers.**

Some people might be more comfortable having the time to write a text and would not like to talk on the phone, others might struggle more with writing and would prefer to send an audio message.

4

Videos and visuals can enhance communication

Video messages add a personal touch to distance learning and many bilingual families may understand more verbal English than written, so the combination of a warm greeting, demonstration of an activity and simple language to explain tasks –in a format that they can watch multiple times or review –will be very helpful for them.

If you have access to an interpreter or a cultural liaison or ambassador, you can record messages. If you don't have access to human resources, there are apps and other ways to translate materials.

5

Communication about responsibilities

Every culture will have a different view on what the role of the teacher and parent might be.

Focus on the strengths of the home learning environment.

Mention activities that are done at home that support literacy / numeracy.

See support videos here in multiple languages:

<https://www.tcd.ie/Education/research/Multilingual-Families/>

Literacy on the loose videos here:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL55XqDjybyL-dgQrwjoZIUWTuKqdAZ3FH>

Numeracy on the loose videos here:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL55XqDjybyL-BWsuM0jyzNQKT2khElmsA>

Learning at home

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Things to think about:

What do you expect from parents?

What resources do parents need to achieve what they want to achieve?

Can parents help one another?

Encourage parents to use their native language –to boost language skills in the language they know best.