**Communicating with families**
Careful and sensitive communication between teachers and families supports student learning. Teachers communicate with families to learn more about children from the people who know them best.  Teachers share information about children's activities, learning, and development.  Teachers seek ways to partner with families. Communication may take place in person, in writing, or in phone calls. Every conversation with a family is a chance for the teacher to communicate a respectful, open attitude and create a space for a two-way conversation. Teachers must be attentive to considerations of language and culture, respectful and valuing of families, and oriented to working with families to support children.

**Advancing justice through communicating with families**
Without careful consideration, communications with families can reproduce patterns of injustice in home-school relationships. For example, scheduling meetings or events during school hours, communicating only in English, and making assumptions about "home support" can alienate many families. Instead, teachers can partner with families to access the specialized knowledge they have about their child including: a deep understanding of their strengths, what they care about, conditions for how they learn best, and expertise about home culture and family life. Communication offers opportunities for teachers to learn about a child's past experiences in school, how different family members have experienced school themselves, the goals families have for students, how families think they best support their child at home, and details of the home schedule. Talking with families opens doors for parents to see their child as a student, and for teachers to see their students as whole, multifaceted human beings.

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## Decomposition of communicating with families

| Plan for communication with families | Use open, respectful language and maintain a professional tone | Use intentional language and evidence to share information about academic success, behavior, or development with families | Collaborate with families to set goals for students and determine next steps |
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| • Gather artifacts, practice or tools such as student work, teacher or student notes, assessments and/or data<br>• Learn about families' preferred modes of communication. Involve appropriate English language supports.<br>• Learn about and attend sensitively to cultural differences that may shape how a family interprets schooling, teachers, and/or their child's education.<br>• Be aware of personal identities and how they may be perceived by families.<br>• If a meeting takes place at school, create a pleasant communication environment; arrange comfortable seating, avoid distractions, adhere to predetermined times, etc.<br>• If a meeting takes place over the phone, confirm that the time is convenient for the family and each person can hear and be heard easily. Teachers let families know their phone numbers so that they can see who is calling.<br>• Identify questions to ask of families, questions that make use of families' resources and knowledge.<br>• Identify important information to share with families and consider how to communicate that information.<br>• Prepare for a two-way conversation, and to truly listen to families. | • Consider in advance some possible outcomes, suggestions, or actions from the conversation.<br>• Begin interactions with families with a warm, genuine greeting.<br>• Adhere to norms of good communication that are culturally appropriate; maintain eye contact while both speaking and listening, use appropriate body language, and monitor "talk time" that both you and the family members are given.<br>• Make sure you give family members full opportunities to share their opinions, comments, concerns or questions during an interaction.<br>• Balance the conversation with information that demonstrates you care about, like, and appreciate the student, along with any concerns you want to discuss. Keep the conversation positive and constructive.<br>• Do not divulge information about other students or families with whom you work.<br>• Conclude interactions with a genuine, warm goodbye and appreciation for the opportunity to work with family members. | • Use artifacts of practice and data to support what you describe about a student.<br>• Use clear, plain language rather than acronyms or jargon.<br>• Offer specific examples or anecdotes about student learning, behavior or to demonstrate that you know and care about the student.<br>• Use evidence-based language to describe student performance, growth, and/or interactions with classmates.<br>• If students are present, involve them, inviting them to take ownership of their learning and speak to their own experiences.<br>• Use, as appropriate, professional knowledge of content, language development, child development and schooling. | • Invite family members to share their goals for the meeting, add those that were prepared in advance with care for how to express them.<br>• Review main points of discussion; name the assets, resources, or supports that are identified; and determine next steps.<br>• Recognize what you can accomplish in the given time, and be prepared to follow up if necessary. |

**Visual representation of communicating with families**