



School re-opening:

Community support

Session Overview

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Session Objective

- To equip school leaders to effectively support the community of parents so that they feel clear and confident about school reopening.

Community support

Education is likely to change in many ways due to Covid, but schools will not go away. Parents will always need us and we will need them. We are in this together, **for the long run.**

Parents are counting on us to **keep their children safe** while they provide for their families.

The role of an excellent School Leader **extends beyond the school walls** and into the communities our learners come from.

How to win community support during school re-opening

- **As we prepare for re-opening, one of the most important things for us to focus on is community support.**
 - **Parents and the entire community are the most important stakeholders besides our students.**
 - We recommend focusing on doing the following three things:
- 1. **Listen patiently:** Spend as much time as you can speaking directly with parents, family members, and community elders.
 - Listen to them patiently and encourage them to share with you what they are most worried about.
- 2. **Actively involve:** Involve the PTA and BoGs in the planning and execution of the school reopening plan.
 - Don't wait for parents or families to contact us and instead make sure that we start this conversation.
- 3. **Communicate regularly:** For parents and the community to trust us and feel confident in sending their children back to school, we must share with them our preparations and plans for keeping children safe and ensuring a smooth school re-opening.

Activity: Respond to question. Put your answers in the chat box

Respond to the following questions.

Put your answers in the chat box.

1. What are some workable strategies that schools can adapt to increase community support before and during school re-opening?
2. How do you plan to involve your school staff in this plan?

1. School leader resources

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Sample: Community Support Planner Resource



School Leader

A note for school leaders: For a successful school re-opening, we must think through a clear plan for how we are going to gather community support. Some ideas/themes have been provided below:-(a) **Listen - patiently** (b) **Involve - actively and** (c) **Communicate - regularly.** What else can you do? How can you involve your school staff in this plan?

Task	Timelines	Notes
Ensure all class teachers have access (at home) to their class list with all parent phone numbers and ask them to call and speak with parents to check on how they are feeling about re-opening. Ask class teachers to take notes on what the parents said and share them with you.		
CT-Call and speak directly with parents. Ask them how their family is coping and hear their concerns about sending children back to school.		
SL-Call and speak directly with a few students from different classes, checking on how they are feeling and what they think about coming back to school. Encourage class teachers to do the same.		
Identify and invest influential community elders who other parents might listen to.		
Identify and invest community champions (active parents) who can help the school communicate with other parents.		
For each class, help teachers identify some parents who they can call (when required to relay a message from school) who can, in turn, call other parents and so on, to form a communication chain.		
Call a few parents (you can choose from different classes) and speak to them directly. Share with them how the school is preparing for re-opening and what safety measures we will be taking. They will appreciate hearing from the school leader directly.		
Send encouraging messages to parents directly. Encourage teachers to do the same. For		



Community Support guidelines:

A note for School Leaders: As we prepare for re-opening, one of the most important things for us to focus on is Community Support. Our parents and the entire are the most important stakeholders besides our students. For us to have a successful school re-opening, we must first win their trust and build confidence. As with any other parent right now, our families are worried about sending their children back to school. It is up to us to show them how well prepared we are so that they feel confident that their children will be safe with us in school. We not only need to win their trust and build confidence but also involve them in the decision-making process. Our communities can be a big support in our preparation for re-opening. And so, we recommend focusing on doing the following three things:

(a) **Listen - patiently** (b) **Involve - actively and** (c) **Communicate - regularly**

A. Listen - patiently:

Spend as much time as you can speak directly with parents, family members, and community elders. Listen to them patiently - encourage them to share with you what they are most worried about. We must spend time understanding the community's concerns about sending their children back to school. To do this, can make phone calls, meet people 1:1 or in groups, or even organize physical meetings to discuss school re-opening with families and hear their concerns. For any physical meetings, please make sure to adhere to social distancing and other safety protocols like wearing a mask.

B. Involve - actively:

Involve the PTA and BoGs in the planning and execution of the school reopening plan. The community & parents can be a big support in preparation for re-opening. We must actively work towards this - which means that we don't wait for parents or families to contact us and instead make sure that we start this conversation. We must continue to make people feel part of the process and ensure that we are honest about where the school needs their support. This will build a sense of ownership and help us gather support. For example: think of champion parents or elders who are influential in the community - who other people might listen to. Ask for their help in relaying important messages to community members.



C. Communicate regularly:

If we want parents and the community to trust us and feel confident in sending their children back to school, then we must share with them our preparations and plans for keeping children safe and ensuring a smooth school re-opening. We must regularly communicate details about our plans to build win their trust and build confidence. For example, either in conversations, village/group meetings, or even through phone messages/SMS, we can share updates on:

- Safety protocols the school is putting in place - like new entry procedures or placing hand sanitizers or increasing the hand-washing stations in school, etc.
- How the school is planning to deal with instances of students or staff members being sick - like checking the temperature at the entry gate or having a designated quarantine/sick room in case someone begins to show symptoms during the school day etc.
- How the school is planning to ensure children are safe in all areas of the school premises - like ensuring that social distancing norms are followed in all areas like toilets, classrooms, playgrounds, etc, or all students and teachers wearing a mask or ensuring proper airflow in all classrooms or shifting them outside, etc.

We also need to share other details like school reopening dates, timings, etc. It will be especially important to send these messages in the week leading up to school reopening. And so, we recommend planning and keeping the messages ready to send when the time comes.

Key documents to make use of.

- School communication plan

2. Parents as partners



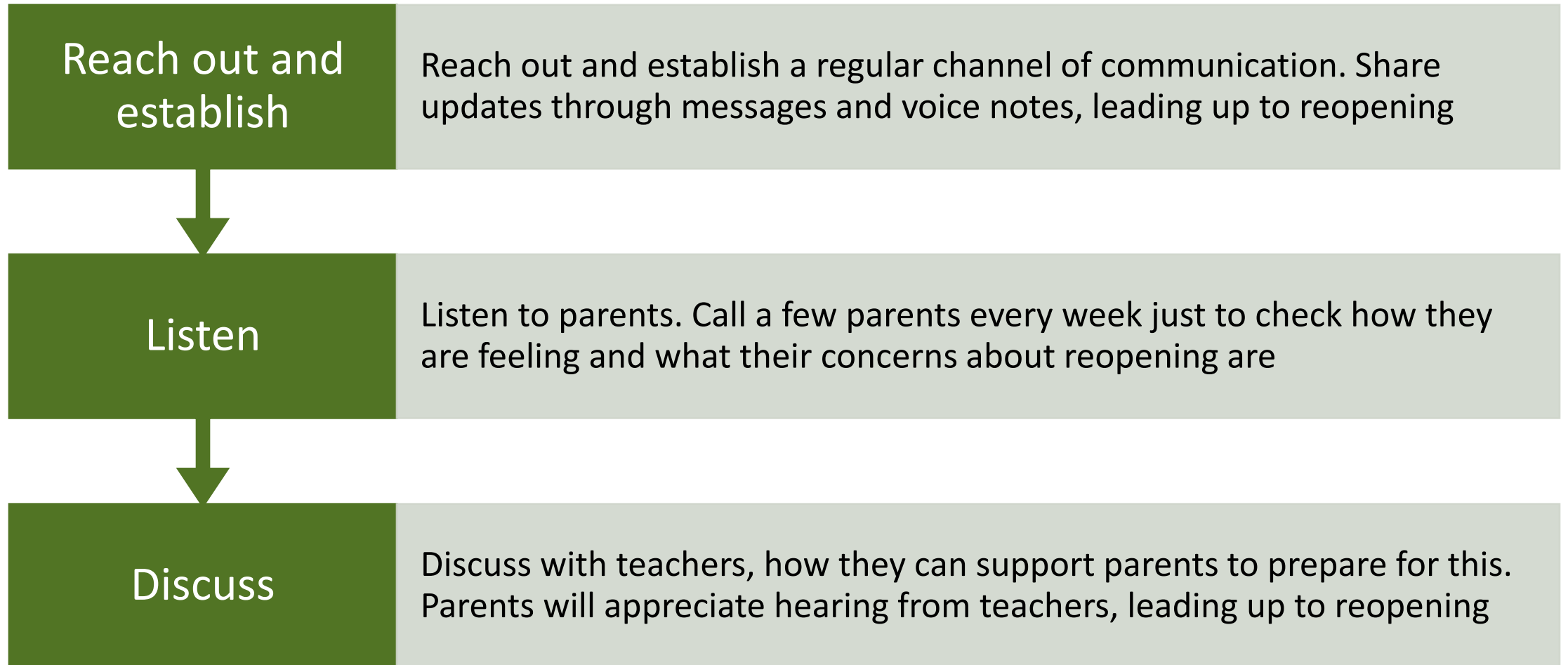
COMMUNITY

Enlist support from the community for reopening. It's a big project and everyone should help in keeping our learners safe. With your staff, discuss and agree how you will involve them.

Identify **community champions** - parents or elders who are/can be leaders in their communities and support the school by helping communicate important messages to others or rallying support for the school's work

Encourage parents and **instil confidence** in them. Help them see how they can play an important role in supporting their child and the school.

3. Supporting parents



Closing reflection

1. In your school/community context, can you think of the person you will identify as your community champions? What skills should this person possess?
2. Is the support mapped to increase community support achievable, realistic and no / low cost?
3. What small step can you take now/today to begin supporting the community?

A close-up photograph of a young boy with a joyful expression, smiling broadly. He is using his hands to frame his face, with his fingers pointing outwards. He is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, shirt. In the background, other children in similar white shirts are visible, though they are out of focus. The overall atmosphere is bright and positive.

Questions?