

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.