Fight covid learning losses with communication

How changing the way teachers communicate with families will impact the academic, social and emotional well-being of children.

By:

Collaborative education can be defined as families and educators sharing the responsibility of educating children together, to encourage their well being and growth as a whole. An internal study led by the Klassroom company has brought to light how positive parent-teacher partnerships impact student success. Teachers noticed a correlation between their improved communication and students striving in school and at home. Over 5000 teachers who use the klassly communication app agreed to participate in a survey and gave feedback on collaborative teaching.

Teaching with actively involved families as opposed to the latter is an entirely different experience for educators. Considering results from the study this text will explore challenges and solutions on how to create environments which enable collaborative teaching with families and the range of benefits that can arise from this. Participating Teachers noticed collaborative teaching affected student growth and success on different levels. As we seek solutions to recover from covid learning losses in schools, we should consider how much the simple act of changing the way we communicate between schools and homes impact the quality of teaching and learning experiences for children. There is no unique magic way to teach, but there is a better way to offer continuous learning support to children and their families so learning never stops.
The objective of using a communication app for teachers is to get in touch with students' families. The main concept is straight-forward, yet there are several apps because there are multiple ways to approach this communication with different focuses. An app that can connect families and educators should be accessible and easy-to-use for both parties, intuitive and easy to use, like a social media platform, information should be clearly displayed and organized and the app should also be inclusive, with built-in automatic translation and free to access. "I've never used this app and thought I wish it did "...", And with every other app I've used I have said those words."(Amanda Thompsons 2nd grade teacher)
92% of teachers use the app to communicate general information about school with their students' families, and 92% noticed that Families are better informed about school.
Teachers need to have access to families to gain trust, benefit from their support and vice versa. A teacher may face occasional misunderstandings at school, and being able to enlighten a situation with the insight of a parent or guardian who knows the child, raised them, and spends time with them at home can help solve situations faster and in the best possible way. If a student is struggling with something personal, the teacher will benefit from the family's insight. As communication is a two-way street, families also benefit from the insight of a teacher regarding what their child is going through at school, where they spend a large part of their day (when school is in-person). This type of support is most constructive when there is mutual trust. Open parent-teacher communications is a recent concept, access to schools and teachers used to be limited to major challenges and the occasional parent teacher conference. Parents were left in the dark regarding their child's education at school and school discipline and home discipline were not always aligned. Not knowing exactly why their child felt certain ways about certain topics resulted in parents blind acceptance of situations out of their control. Yet today one can investigate if frustrations in a young child are due to a lack of understanding and need for support in specific areas. Access to communication with families has also made it a lot more manageable to evaluate learning disabilities. "Autistic individuals experience severe difficulties with communication, behavior, and learning; studies have shown their issues improve when given structure and routine. As expected, learning at home, away from the in-classroom environment, is wreaking havoc for these families. A vital ingredient for them to cope in these unprecedented times is parent-teacher communication."(Idelle Kursman)
When a parent sees their child struggling at home in an area of study or speaks in frustration, they can reach out to the teacher and find solutions, receive suggestions, and ideas on ways to support their child.

One could argue Parental involvement has increased so much in recent years in some areas, for some teachers it has resulted in an overwhelming presence in their work which can be disruptive and difficult to manage."Parent communication was overwhelming for me, if I didn't have the Klassly app I think that I would go nuts,... "(Miriam Baca, 4th grade teacher). During school closures caused by the pandemic, many families were required to support learning at home if they could, and had to provide more support than ever before. For families who were already engaged, this was an opportunity for more personal learning support for children which
is very positive for their learning. Unfortunately, some parents might then come to expect the same level of personalized attention they had offered at home to be available in the classrooms going forward. The move from schools to remote or hybrid learning environments has heightened Parental involvement for some students and transformed the relationship and understanding between teachers and families. Parents are now a much more involved part of the equation when it comes to making decisions about how and when children's education takes place, the previous relationship between school districts & Teacher unions making decisions will need to take Parents into consideration a lot more in order to ensure schools retain their communities and financial support after the pandemic passes, making it impossible to return exactly to what was once called “normal.”

Children can only receive more personalized support at home if and when parents or guardians are informed about what is being studied in school. Although differentiated teaching is highly encouraged today, it's difficult to fully achieve. Teachers can find it difficult in most environments to adapt different methods of teaching to 30+ students with a set curriculum that needs to progress on a schedule if they aren't receiving the support they need from their school, specialists and families. An app for communication should enable teachers to find out crucial information about a child before they even join the class, in a confidential and non-invasive way. There are features like the KYS (Know Your Student) questionnaire on Klassly where parents have the opportunity to share such info which could change the child's school year by simply letting the teacher in on preferences, fears, strengths and weaknesses.

Some simple steps can help, for example, 93% of teachers say they use their communication app to inform parents about the projects they do at school, and 95% of teachers noticed families were better aware of what students are working on in class. This is an effective and easy way to support what families know about the way school and the education system work today compared to how things were when they were in school. Most would agree that the question “how was school today?” is usually answered vaguely. Knowledge changes everything. Teachers know this better than anyone, and giving parents knowledge by making it available and accessible is the best way to dismiss confusion, and avoid misunderstandings. It also is the first step in creating a trusting relationship. Teachers show they are open and what their work ethic and values are, they show their daily rituals and open a window into a world many families know nothing about as it has changed so much since they were in school themselves, teachers can show what topics they are exploring with students, and messages they share with families are organized, accessible and centralized.

It's important to notice here that most apps approach this differently by focusing on classroom discipline or homework management. Klassly focuses on communication and keeping the virtual space flexible so teachers can focus on what matters most to them, the app shouldn't guide the way teachers present themselves, what the teacher wants to focus on should be what shines through the most so the depiction of the school experience is realistic. There are a surprising number of teaching styles, principals know first hand that no two teachers are the same, just like students, they need a space they can control, just like they can control their physical classroom, daily routines and choices of communication with students.
“We want families to be involved and feel connected to the learning that is happening in our classrooms.” Rachelle Dene Proth

It’s safe to say students “learn best when they have trusting relationships with educators, safe environments, a sense of control, and teachers who have the time and space to attend to key emotional skills and needs”(B. Gross, A. Opalka). Investing in a solution to offer some semblance of a clear and organized environment virtually should be a priority.

Beyond the invaluable everyday sharing, there are also important last minute or urgent communications teachers need to send home, 89% of teachers said they prefer to use Klassly to communicate with families in case of emergencies and 97% of these teachers said they find families are more rapidly aware of the information. The school-wide management platform called the klassboard enables Principles and admin to broadcast messages to every class and send notifications to parents’ phones when using the mobile app. According to the ISTE standards for technology in education: “Leaders of education are responsible for engaging families in establishing a vision, strategic plan and for the ongoing evaluation of students.
Leaders are transforming learning with technology. [They should] build on the shared vision by collaboratively creating a strategic plan that articulates how technology will be used to enhance learning. [They should] communicate effectively with stakeholders to gather input on the plan, celebrate successes and engage in a continuous improvement cycle.”

During school closures, Moskowitz, the CEO at Success academy shared her views on how accountability and coaching are facilitated by remote learning, school admin can join any virtual remote teaching: “observing instruction, intervening and live coaching, and engaging students as needed.” These advantages can continue to benefit school leaders as we move forward and use the positive experiences of a virtual transition in the new systems schools adopt.

Acknowledging at the same time the “unprecedented” level of partnership expected from Parents, who were urged to follow up at home, overseeing homework, reviewing emails daily, schedules, getting in contact with teachers and so forth. Organizing curriculums made it easier to transition to online. Whatever tool teachers choose to communicate with families, it should facilitate sharing projects, follow up work and combining support so students benefit the most for in depth learning and acquire knowledge fully. “The app allows parents and teachers to have smooth communication, so customizing and sharing activities is just a click away. There are many advantages to being a part of the Klassly community.” Dipika Ruparel

Connecting with each family, regularly sharing photos and short messages, topics of study, student presentations, school events... sounds like it will take a lot of time if one has never used a communication app before, but this can be improved by the choice of platform a school uses for communication. “A key feature of Klassly is its simplicity and ease of navigation. Parents,
teachers and administrators, whether they are tech-savvy or not, will be comfortable using Klassly and the Klassboard.” Rachelle Dene Proth. According to the ISTE standards for technology in education, Technology should be used to increase equity and inclusion in the classroom.

The closer it is to social media, the least like an obligation it may feel to both teachers and parents. One of the top priorities school leaders tend to overlook is how user-friendly the app will be for both teachers and families. The app may have many great sounding features but if teachers don’t enjoy using it, they will not use it enough to engage families, and families will not actively participate on the platform and keep track of school life. Any effort of communication falls apart if it is not accessible and simple enough to use. “As an education professor, I continuously stress the need for gaining parental engagement and emails and voicemails have become too cumbersome in our ever-evolving technological world.” (John Essington, Prof. of Ed at Blackburn college) Teachers and families should not be required to go through training to connect. It should be as intuitive as human relationships, without language or tech barriers and with great app support.
The company offering the solutions, such as klassroom, is responsible for supporting the users, teachers aren't IT support, so choosing a platform that accompanies teachers as much as families will matter in the success of the app.

The responsibility of a child's education is a heavy weight that’s meant to be shared, and with an inclusive platform, multiple family members can have access to teachers and classwork, each grownup can have access regardless of their geographic or other personal situation. A stupendous 90% of teachers say Klassly specifically enables parents who are separated to better keep track of their child's academic progress. “This is really cool because I have a lot of split households, it works really well for kids that bounce around so Mom and Dad know exactly what we are working on.” (Shelley Coates 2nd grade teacher). In a world of recomposed families, flexibility in communication and accessibility is important. “We need to invite parents to partake in their child's learning and view parents as tools for increasing student growth.” (John Essington, Prof. of Ed at Blackburn college)

In general, 85% of Klassly teachers find that the app enables families to be better involved in their child's school life, and 1 in 2 teachers say they believe the app contributes to students’ increased academic success.

This increase in school success can come from several side effects of improved communication According to teachers comments and feedback. We particularly consider the increased schoolwork support at home, the confidence students have gained from knowing families and teachers are a united supportive team, and the personal commitment children make when they feel their parents might be watching, seeing photos and such.

Teachers are seeing something magical happen. Kids strive when their support system is on the same page, there is no confusion and they can be confident they will receive the help they need and can overcome anything. Kids depend on grownups for that confidence. It's never just about Academic prowess, social and emotional well-being are immediately impacted as teachers witness how students benefit from positive teacher-parent relationships.

Simply sharing what is being taught in class has naturally involved families in their children's academic growth because now they know. When they know, they can ask about specifics, follow up in a few minutes and just check up on progress little by little. Only 40% of teachers use the app to assign homework, which is often assumed to be the easiest way for parental involvement, it's something they can check, proofread, and stay up to date on where in their curriculum the children are. Yet, even without a focus solely on Homework, through the general information parents are exposed to on the scroll-through timeline in the klassly app, families are able to engage with their children on what they are learning. 80% of teachers will agree that using Klassly has encouraged parents to communicate with their children about their work done in school.

For those who teach grades where after schoolwork is assigned and use the app for homework management, more than 1 in 2 teachers noticed students turn in their homework more diligently
since posting in the Klasswork. More assiduity with homework means a better grasp of topics being learned in school and has a direct effect on academic progress.

We asked teachers if they had any ELL (English Language Learner) students or students with families who speak a different first language, and 1 in 2 teachers confirmed this modern global reality. In their classrooms, there is at least one student whose family may be facing a language barrier when it comes to accessing school progress and for general communications with the teacher. The level of English fluency cannot be generalized, but nothing compares to being able to express yourself in your mother tongue. We discovered that 1 in 2 teachers rely on instant translation in chats, comments and messages available in the Klassly app to communicate with their students’ families. Bridging the gap between school and home should be an inclusive action, and accessing all families should not put additional pressure on teachers.

Not every family can or want to be involved in their kids’ school life. Families may sometimes have apprehensions about school, either due to their own memories or they may be misled by the media’s representation of education. Educators are undervalued
contributors to society. “The pandemic is a challenge but a chance for educators to prove our importance to adults whose only experience in education was as a student.” (John Essington, Prof. of Ed at Blackburn college). The personal dedication, patience, and professionalism it takes to nurture and ignite a love of learning in children is not an innate in most people, even for parents, academic and socioemotional support of young children can be extremely challenging and require learning and personal growth, these are some of the reasons working twitch teachers who are professionally trained to support students is so helpful and important.

Since using a communication app like Klassly, 85% of teachers said to feel more recognition and appreciation for their work, and 86% of them say families prefer this app for school-home communication to any other previous solution. Feeling appreciated helps stay motivated in a demanding work environment. Families who enjoy using the app will actively check it and participate, which will increase it’s positive effects. Communication can only be effective if both families and teachers enjoy using the platform through which they communicate. Research on refugee teacher training programs developed at the university of Maryland, show that teachers reported the “component on self care was the most helpful training session, because it showed them that taking care of themselves and their own mental well being made it easier to manage their classrooms effectively (O’Neal et al.).” Teachers found that being able to manage their own stress enabled them to focus their energy better on creating a learning environment for their students. One can easily make the connections between teaching in a transitioning, unstable stressful environment and teaching during a pandemic. The way teachers feel matters and has an effect on their students, so choosing tools and apps that give gratification and recognition for one’s work will positively benefit parent-teacher relationships and students.

Engaging families is not easy, but the benefits that the teachers and the students reap are exponential. We see how the choice of communication tools can have a snowball effect on student success. At multiple levels, from teachers' job satisfaction, stress and time management, organization and sense of control for teachers and families, and students feeling a culture of strong support, the words “communication app” affect a wide range of tangible actions in school and at home. A simple conclusion is that Apps should support teachers in their communication journey by making it easier and more accessible. Because students grow better when parents and teachers work together.”It's not a complicated software that a school has to install, but a tool every teacher can choose to use to communicate with parents using a simple app on their phone.” (Monica Burns Edtech specialist, Classtechtips creator, former classroom teacher, speaker and author)
Technology in education is very different from technology elsewhere, it is tech that is meant to strengthen human relationships, not make them feel further apart. Students should never feel reduced to a number for their behavior or a test score, anything that is related to school will affect their relationship to learning, so adults who make decisions about anything to do with school should always keep children at the center of the equation and head in the direction for a growth mindset which will increase support and the quality of the support and learning a student can experience.

A simple thing like choosing the right communication platform changes the lives of children by bringing their grownups closer together. It's the best way to increase families' understanding of the importance of school which leads them to support the work of educators, and benefit the wellbeing of children. Sharing knowledge is the simple first step that ignites KNOWING how to best support their child with school work and better socio-emotional support for every student at school and at home.
Below are the results of the survey asking over 5k klassly teacher-users about their experience with the communication app:

1) 92.1% use the app to communicate general information about school with their students' families.
2) 92.3% have noticed that Families are better informed about school.
3) 93.1% use Klassly to inform parents about student projects.
4) 95.2% have noticed families are better aware about school projects.
5) 88.5% use Klassly to communicate with families in case of emergencies.
6) 97% find Families informed faster.
7) 77.3% are interested in Collaborative education (parents and teachers).
8) 68.8% use Klassly to involve Families in academic projects.
9) 79.9% find that using Klassly enables parents to communicate with their children about their work done in school.
10) 39.7% use klassly to share Homework with Parents.
11) 53.9% have noticed students turn in their homework more diligently since posting them in Klassly on the Klassboard.
12) For educational project, teachers prioritize collaborative education
    - 26.9% Very much
    - 62.2% Moderately
    - 10.8% Not at all
13) 91% think Klassly enables parents who are separated to better keep track of their child's academic progress.
14) 53.6% have students from ESOL (English to speakers of other languages) families in their class.
15) 1 in 2 teachers use Klassly to communicate with them thanks to the translation feature.
16) 84.5% find that using the Klassly app enables parents to be better involved in the academic progress of their children.
17) 1 in 2 teachers think Klassly has an impact on children's academic success.
18) 84.5% think that through the app, parents appreciate the value of their work better.
19) 85.8% notice Parents prefer Klassly to the previous tools or platform used for school to home communication.

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To speak to our team today or check out our FAQs: https://klassroom.crisp.help/en-us/