Engaging and Empowering Families of Young Children in the Digital Age

Luisa M. Cotto, M.Ed.
Manager of Engagement and Communications

unitedwaycfe.org
ECEwebinars.com

Get to know me!

Luisa Cotto

• B.Ed. in Elementary Education
• M.Ed. Curriculum and Instruction, Instructional Technology
• Worked as a coach and family liaison in two early literacy grants
• Currently work as a manager of engagement and communications at United Way of Miami-Dade
• Love to blog about early childhood and technology and use social media
@luisacotto

Webinar Resources

To access the webinar resources visit:
http://tinyurl.com/familytechtools

https://www.pinterest.com/luisacotto/
Poll: Who is listening?

Administrator
Teacher
Curriculum Specialist
Trainer/Coach
Other

Webinar goals

Goals

Understanding today’s families
What is family?

Family

Family: “The people living in the children’s homes who love and care for them.” (Rieger, 2008)

The importance of engaging everyone

Brønfenbrenner’s ecological system theory

Figure 1. Brønfenbrenner’s ecological system theory
(DeBock & Roberts, 2001, p. 26)
Families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life. . . When schools build partnerships with families that respond to their concerns and honor their contributions, they are successful in sustaining connections that are aimed at improving student achievement.

(Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 7)
Create a family-friendly environment

Ask yourself these questions:
• Are there any barriers between school and family (e.g. language)?
• Do I have a way to know families preferred mode of communication (in person, email, phone, etc.)?
• Are the scheduled family meetings considering families’ input?
• Do families have transportation?
• Can children attend meetings or do I provide childcare at the school during meetings?

Fred Rogers

“It is through relationships that we grow best and learn best.”

Engaging families using a variety of digital tools.
Lessons from marketing

Marketing is the way companies interact with consumers to create relationships that are beneficial to both parties.

Family Engagement is the way early childhood programs interact with families to create relationships that are beneficial to both parties.

Get to know your target audience families

• All about my child form
• Meetings
• Preferred mode of communication
• Home visit
• Surveys
• Be open to listen
Communication Channels

Poll

What digital communication channel you use most frequently when communicating with families?

Emails
Email use

204 billion is the number of email sent/received per day.

Email use

Email communication continues to be the most familiar communication channel and people’s top online activity.

Email use

Lessons from marketing

- Content must be relevant
- Subject line should be consistent
- Make it visual
- Add a call to action
Hello families,

This week, after reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, children got really interested about caterpillars and butterflies. We decided to watch a video on YouTube to learn more and we are planning a visit to the Butterfly garden.

Here is the link to the video: https://youtu.be/AZk6nZGH9Xo

Do you know how to create a butterfly garden? We would like to create one at our Center. Here is the link I found on how to do that: [http://www.wikihow.com/Create-a-Butterfly-Garden](http://www.wikihow.com/Create-a-Butterfly-Garden) . We would appreciate your help.

---

**Mobile Devices**

64% of Americans now own a smartphone. 63% of them use their cellphones to go online.
Messages from families

- Teachers can encourage family members to leave messages for their children. This will help smooth the transition from home to school.

- Nowadays, phones have the capability of recording audio that can be sent by email.

Families record stories in other languages

Los tres deseos

Quick Response Codes

- Create QR codes easily at http://www.qrstuff.com/

- Download QR Code reader in app store

- Link to existing content or create new content.
Engaging Families
SeeSaw: The Learning Journal

SeeSaw is a student-driven digital portfolio that allows children to create, capture and share their learning. You can share the portfolio with each family and they can add comments.

Engaging Families
Remind

Safely send text messages to families without seeing their phone numbers or sharing yours. One-way messaging only. This allow you to send updates and reminders.

Integrating Multiple Forms of Documentation
Shadow Puppet

You can choose images, record voice over and share it. You can share via email, text message, Facebook and Twitter
Integrating Multiple Forms of Documentation

Flipgram

This app allows you to create videos using pictures on your phone. Then you can share with families.

Multi-touch mobile devices

Common Sense Media

Social Media

noun websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.
Most popular social media networks

Facebook

- Profile
- Pages
- Groups
Facebook: Pages

- Can act as a central channel of communication in which schools can share the latest news, resources, pictures of school events, and more.
- Each classroom in the school can have a group in which they can share pictures with families privately, have conversations, and create polls.
- Video chat with expert and families.
- Use it to collaborate with other early childhood practitioners.

Facebook: Pages

- Can be public or closed
- You can use them to collaborate or share information
- Share files
- Comment
- Reconnect
- Share resources

Facebook
Twitter

Most popular social media networks

Twitter

Statistics as of 4.25.2014 Designed by: Leverage - leveragenewagemedia.com

Twitter Language

@username – A tweet to a specific person

RT @username – Is a retweet, when you share someone else’s tweet

# – is a hashtag. Hashtags are used to organize posts or create chat rooms within twitter.
Some hashtags to follow

#TechEarlyYears
#earlychildhood
#ecetech
#prek
#preschool
#childcare
#ELL

Pinterest

Most popular social media networks

Pinterest

Statistics as of 4.25.2014 Designed by: Leverage - leveragenewagemedia.com
Virtual Field Trip
YouTube
Create playlist on your YouTube channel with your “approved” videos. Not all content on YouTube is good.

Beyond the Classroom Walls
Skype
luisa.cotto
education.skype.com

Beyond the Classroom Walls
Google Hangout
Recap

Go from micro to macro: A child’s learning is influenced by all the people in his life and the experiences he is presented with.

Encourage collaboration: Make sure that children’s learning does not stop in the classroom.

Stay connected: To have an effective two-way communication use multiple communication channels.

Keep informed: Use social media to share ideas, learn from others.

Connect with us!

unitedwaymiami.org
unitedwacfe.org
https://twitter.com/UnitedWayMiami
facebook.com/UnitedWayMiami
youtube.com/user/UnitedWayMiami

Luisa M. Cotto
cottol@unitedwaymiami.org
305-646-7118
Twitter: @luisacotto

Q&A