

Parent Online Learning Support

North Middle School Health Sciences and Technology

Aurora, CO



As the world learned about the COVID-19 pandemic schools worldwide were among the first to close. North Middle School (NMS), just like all schools, faced so many uncertainties, yet their team quickly formed a plan to augment the streams of communication and offer technology support.

As NMS transitioned online, the staff felt concern about whether or not families would know they could still rely on the school for support. Teachers utilized apps like Talkingpts.org to text individual parents in different languages and leadership sent a whole-school weekly communication via email, phone and text. When teachers were unable to get ahold of a student, administration continued to make the calls. At times, staff would contact all members of the household to find a student. Staff also posted the family liaison's work cell phone number on the school's website and office staff checked the school voicemail daily.

Once staff made contact with the families, it was clear that they needed to be more concise with all the information that we were sending to families and find an easier way to share it. Therefore, North's family liaison created a [Youtube video](#) that showed an overview of how to help students' login, monitor their progress, and what to expect to see in the online platform. The liaison then posted the video on North's Facebook page and texted the video to all families.

After making the first video, the liaison made another one to help parents [utilize their mobile hotspot](#). The next step was to make sure that staff offered parents an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback about how the school could improve online learning support. To begin this dialogue, NMS hosted a couple of virtual coffee chats with parents, the principal, the administrative team, and counselors.

Counselors answered questions and offered parental advice to support students through this difficult time. The virtual coffee chat also encouraged staff to listen to parents' concerns and then to take action. One theme was that families wanted to take a more active role in their student's learning. As a result, staff helped parents create their own account for their student's online learning on Edgenuity. This way parents could see if they were on track with their learning and how much time they spent logged in. During the coffee chats staff also learned about immediate needs and parents were able to offer their support to each other.

One of those immediate needs were groceries. North's family liaison, Margarita Alamillo Barrios, had been in contact with the non-profit organization *We Don't Waste*, and promptly planned a food drive-thru in the school's parking lot. *We Don't Waste* took care of the entire operation and distributed close to 300 food boxes. Barrios explains: "We are very thankful that we had the opportunity to make this connection between *We Don't Waste* and our community. Although *We Don't Waste* offers support in many areas of Colorado, it was very helpful and convenient for our families to be able to find them in a familiar space."

Barrios continued: "Although the pandemic seemed to have abruptly driven us away from each other in many ways we grew closer and stronger as a community. We were able to go outside of the regular methods to reach our families and make more connections."