

# Technology is Changing How Child Care Centres Communicate with Parents



Of all the trends influencing child care technology is amongst the most complicated. The influence of social media, websites, e-mail, and SMS (text) messaging is forever expanding. This **Success Recipe** article is our way of providing some suggestions on how to take advantage of the opportunities technology creates to enhance relationships with families.

This article focuses on two audiences that child care centres communicate with today:

1. The families of children currently in your care
2. The families of children you may care for in the future

## Communicating with Families who currently have Children in your Care

Use technology to communicate with your current families to strengthen the connection between your centre, the family, and their child's experience. One way to look at it is to imagine the technology as a digital extension of a classroom bulletin board. The things worth highlighting on a bulletin board are often worth communicating digitally. Some examples are event notifications, post-event mementos, classroom successes, individual achievements, instructional information, and pictures. For families, the communication should be transparent and reinforces their confidence that their child is in good care.

**Provide relevant and exciting content (i.e. updates, pictures) using the following tools when you send communications to parents:**

- **Facebook:** Creating a Facebook page is a way to extend the experience of your centre into the digital realm. Posts should be timely and consistent. *Caution:* be sure to have permission to post any child specific information including pictures



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- **E-mail:** Sending updates by e-mail is an efficient way of reaching parents. E-mail communications should be short, direct, and to the point. Avoid using e-mail for broad communication as parents will tune out. Instead, personalize emails with relevant information, updates, and pictures. *Caution:* Canada recently introduced new Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) that makes permission an important element in electronic communication. This is less important when communicating with your current families because their consent is considered to be implied as they are defined as “customers”, but it still requires clear opt-out options
- **Newsletters:** Newsletters remain a great way to update everyone and can be delivered as paper documents and digitally. *Caution:* CASL will affect the sending of newsletters by e-mail as described above

## Communicating with Prospective Families who are looking into Child Care Options

Using technology to communicate with prospective families is a great way to raise profile awareness and build confidence in your centre as the choice for their children.

The most important tool to help reach prospective families is to create an online presence. Build a website to increase your centre’s profile and credibility in the community.

- **Awareness:** It is important that your website comes up in any searches in your area. Include your centre’s contact information and use keywords such as “child care” and “after school” that would generate higher search results for your centre
- **Credibility:** Impression is everything when it comes to a website. First, inspire trust by posting information about your centre – who you are, the staff, credentials (if any), program offerings, meal plans, events, etc. Include testimonials from current parents about how happy their children are under your care. Second, address how the centre will meet the needs of parents. Make it easy to see the programs and attributes of your centre that help you stand out from everyone else. If you have a brochure about your centre, have a digital copy available on your website to download. Your goal is to get them to want to contact you after looking at your website