COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS FOR AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

Looking to stay in touch with your afterschool teams and families during these uncertain times? Montana Afterschool Alliance has compiled a list of resources that will support you in navigating the various ways to stay in touch during Covid-19. Below, you will find tools to maximize your communication efforts from messaging apps to video conferencing networks.

**Messaging/Chat** -

- **WhatsApp**: WhatsApp allows you to stay connected to others through fast, simple messaging and calling. Users are able to send messages without SMS fees, create group chats, make voice and video calls, send voice messages, and share documents and photos. WhatsApp is available through your phone or desktop. This is a great option to keep in touch with parents and students at home!

- **Google Hangouts**: If your team members are familiar with Google, have Gmail accounts, and an internet connection, Google Hangout may be the perfect option! Hangouts can be used to send messages and make phone and video calls. Chat conversations can hold up to 150 people, while video calls can hold up to 10 (Gmail/G-Suite users) or 25 (Education/Business users) people.
  - **G-Suite**: If your team is already associated within G-Suite (Business and Education included), Hangouts Meet allows you to host video calls, meetings, collaborate on Google documents and presentations across devices, and store and share files within the cloud. **G-Suite pricing plans vary on business needs**.

- **Facebook Messenger**: If you’re already connected to team members via Facebook, Messenger provides a quick and simple way to send messages without the need to exchange phone numbers. You can also share videos, photos, and voice messages.

- **Slack**: Slack utilizes channels as a single place for messaging and sharing tools and files to connect team members. Channels can be created for individual projects or teams, and members can join and exit channels as needed. Slack also offers features like voice calls, video chats, and screen sharing to maximize collaboration.

- **Glip**: Sponsored by RingCentral, Glip makes teamwork easy and effective through its sharing and messaging capabilities. Users are able to share desktops, presentations, and files and host video conferences of up to 100 participants - from any kind of device.

- **Remind**: Remind helps administrators, teachers, parents, and students stay connected and share resources. This app, built for education, provides an avenue for easy two-way communication and even has the capability to connect to other resources like GoogleDrive,
Canvas, OneDrive, and more! Check out this guide on how to use Remind to support remote learning during Covid-19.

- **Reach**: Reach is a mass text and email chain app that allows you to reach all of your contacts with quick and simple messages. Through message templates and private message capabilities, Reach increases engagement and welcomes more responses. It also supports multiple platforms, including iMessage, text, email, and WhatsApp.

**Video Conferencing** -

- **Zoom**: Zoom has multiple capabilities for meeting hosts and participants. You can connect with up to 100 participants, and see up to 49 cameras at once. Multiple participants can share their screens simultaneously, chat with participants during the meeting, and record meetings with searchable transcripts. You can also enable polling and Q&A, virtual hand-raising, and track participant engagement.

- **Google Hangouts**: Connect with up to 25 team members via Google Hangouts. You can see up to 10 cameras at once. As stated above, if your team is associated with G-Suite, you can utilize Hangouts Meet, which allows up to 250 video callers. Google Hangouts is easiest to use with Google-associated email accounts. Read this article from the University of Minnesota that compares the features and uses of Zoom and Google Hangouts.

- **Skype**: Owned by Microsoft, Skype allows you to host a video or audio conference with up to 50 people, record your calls, share your screen with participants, and enable live captions and subtitles. You can also share files, links, and photos in the conversation. If your team utilizes Microsoft Office, Microsoft Teams provides a way to work with, chat with, and collaborate with team members remotely.

- **Facebook Messenger Video**: You can also connect with others through Facebook Messenger via video calls. Video calls are available in the same way you usually access Facebook, from the website or Messenger app. For those wanting to connect with their students, there is a “Kids Version” of Messenger, which allows parents to monitor their child’s exchanges and hide their profile image.

- **Free Conference Call**: Free Conference Call allows you to host video conferences of up to 1,000 participants, record calls, actively share and annotate on your screen, and chat with others. You can also create personal meeting rooms and integrate resources from other apps, like Slack or Dropbox. Free Conference Call is a “Pay What You Can” platform, which allows you to contribute as you are able.