

Frequently Asked Parent Questions

Candid conversations based on mutual trust between families and educators are critical, especially after the disruptions to learning caused by the pandemic.

An open exchange of information and observations can shed light on a parent’s understanding of their child’s progress. Encourage families to ask questions and don’t think of the “tough” ones as problematic; use the moment as an opportunity to help families partner with you to support student academic and social/emotional growth.



Below are thought-starters to support you as you listen to families openly and navigate these conversations.

ACADEMICS AND GRADE-LEVEL ACHIEVEMENT

What’s most important for me to know about making sure my child is on track after COVID-related learning loss?

- As highlighted in a large national [study](#) by TNTP and Zearn, students are more successful when they have the chance to do work that is on their grade level, not just ‘remediation’ — the traditional approach of reviewing all the content that students missed.
- Parents can make sure their child is exposed to grade-level work through online resources such as [Khan Academy](#), [Zearn](#), and others. In the fall, they can use [this toolkit](#) to talk to their child’s new teacher about acceleration vs. remediation.

Why did my child receive passing report card grades if they aren’t on grade level?

- Share that grades represent more than grade-level mastery and that they are just one piece of the bigger picture. For example:
 - » *Grades often include effort and/or progress — good grades can come from participating in class, turning in homework, and/or showing significant improvement over time. Though a student may have made progress, it’s possible they may still be below the grade-level standard.*
 - » *By sharing multiple measures — classroom and home observations, benchmark tests, classwork, and grades — families can know exactly which skills to focus on. Based on this full picture of progress, let families know you want to team up with them to make a learning plan for their child.*
- Conversations like this are deeply personal. Authentically listen to what parents have to say and validate all that they are already doing to support their child’s learning.

- Consider the following signs that may give insight on how a parent is feeling and ideas for how to navigate it in a positive and actionable way.

» **Surprised:** *They may not have realized their child was struggling. They accept the information from the test scores, but are clearly disappointed. They may internalize the test performance as a reflection of their child or themselves.*

What to do?

- Assure them that they are not alone. Millions of parents across the country are in the same boat as they are — helping their children get on track academically.
- Explain that test scores are a diagnostic tool, not a label. Low scores help us to identify what their child struggles with and figure out what they need to be academically successful.
- Emphasize that the scores are a starting point for a bigger conversation, and action can be taken. Low scores do not reflect the abilities of the child or the parent.

» **Frustrated:** *They want to know why their child's grades may be significantly better than their test scores. They ask the 'tough' questions about why the grades aren't consistent with test performance. They question and/or want to understand the purpose of the standardized tests.*

What to do?

- Validate how they may feel about their child as a student (Example: "I thought they were fine" or "How is this happening?"). Explain that their child can be a good student and still need additional help.
- Acknowledge there is a lot of jargon in these scores and that it can be confusing. Explain what the terminology means: What is percentile? What does grade level mean?
- Define the difference between grades and test scores: Grades evaluate not just mastery, but also effort and engagement. Test scores mainly focus on mastery.

» **Motivated to Act:** *In the moment, it may feel like they are blaming you or their child for not doing enough. They may be unsure where to start but they want to take action. It may be their first time facing their child's academic struggles.*

What to do?

- Validate that the news may be a lot to take in but that you want to help them take action and team up on making a learning plan.
- Share that while you are the teacher, the child's achievement is a result of many other factors including the disruption to learning during the pandemic. It's an issue millions of students across the country are facing, which is why there are resources available to help.
- Assure them they have already done the hard part by getting informed about their child's progress, and now you can work together to get their child back on track.

MY CHILD'S LEARNING PLAN

What are the most important things I can do to help my child reach their learning goals this year?

- Use this simple 3-step [Parent-Teacher Planning Tool](#) to co-create a plan with families. It helps guide conversations by beginning with parent observations/input then sharing benchmark data and teacher observations to inform a focused plan that maximizes classroom and home learning.
- Share ideas on how to create a positive and fun learning environment at home, such as:
 - » *Provide a quiet space where your child can work. If you have more than one child, create a schedule of when each child can use the space.*
 - » *Be positive and praise your child for working hard and completing assignments. Celebrate successes like learning something new that was once hard for them.*
 - » *Ask your child to explain what they are learning (make it fun by having them “teach you” or other family members!).*
 - » *Monitor your child’s learning. For example, as much as possible, notice how they are completing their homework and learning activities.*
 - » *Ask after school program leaders and/or tutors for help when you have questions or see your child needs more support.*
 - » *Encourage your child to read as much as they can. In addition to assigned reading, let your child pick what they read. Talk with your child about what they are reading.*



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

How can I continue to support life skills (social/emotional) development at home?

- Share with parents a personal example of what worked this year in developing their child’s social/emotional skills (provide a concrete strategy as much as possible). Let parents know about the social/emotional supports available through the school or community based organizations. Be prepared to answer questions like:
 - » *What kinds of support services can the school connect me to? (e.g., after school enrichment programs, mental health support, counseling, etc.).*