

A Teacher's Guide

Given all remote learning and hybrid learning models will be implemented this fall, parent-teacher partnerships will be more important than ever to ensure student success. A national parent survey conducted by Learning Heroes¹ during the spring school closures revealed actionable insights:

- A majority of parents felt more connected to their child's daily education and, as a result, want to be more engaged moving forward. For example, they want a better understanding of what their child is expected to learn and how they are achieving academically.
- However, 92% of parents, regardless of race, education, or income level, believe their child is performing at or above grade level. This is in stark contrast to the National Assessment of Educational Progress data, which show that only 1/3 of students nationally are at grade level in reading and math.² The disconnect between how parents perceive their child's performance and the reality must be addressed for parents to most effectively support learning at home.

As a result of school closures last Spring, many students experienced some level of unfinished learning and may not be fully prepared for grade level work. Teachers and parents will need a shared understanding of where students are academically at the start of the year so they can partner to ensure students stay on track. To facilitate effective two-way communication and information sharing about student learning, the Parent-Teacher Planning Tool was created.

- 1 Learning Heroes, *Parents 2020: COVID-19 Closures, A Redefining Moment for Students, Parents & Schools*, https://r50gh2ss1ic2mww8s3uvjq1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/LH_2020-Parent-Survey-Partner-1.pdf
- 2 National Assessment of Educational Progress, The Nation's Report Card, <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/mathematics/>



WHAT IS THE PARENT-TEACHER PLANNING TOOL?

To help get a holistic view of the student's academic, social, and emotional development, the tool brings together insights from you (the teacher), the parent/guardian and the student. It helps contextualize each student and their experience, enabling you and the parent to create a student learning plan.

As support for using the tool, we've included the following:

- 1 The below 'How-To Guide'
- 2 A Teacher Discussion Guide for frequently asked parent questions (including the tough ones)

HOW DOES THE TOOL WORK?

STEP 1:

Completed by Teacher: After students take a beginning of the year benchmark (e.g. interim, curriculum-embedded, or standards-aligned test), educators complete the tool with benchmark data for each student.

- To simplify for teachers, the template was designed to directly link to the assessment system and generate a tool specific to each student. Alternatively, teachers can manually input data and their observations if linking the data isn't possible.
- Districts/Schools can customize this section to their benchmark assessment (e.g. name/description of the test, scale), include a graph to plot a student's score, or a placeholder to insert the visual from a student's assessment results.
- Teachers then share the tool with parents, using a platform they know parents have access to (e.g. via mail, email, parent portal or communications app (such as REMIND), or sent home with the student).

MULTIMEDIA FORMAT AND SUPPORT FOR TOOL:

- Designed as a PDF, it can be printed and sent home, or emailed and completed on a computer.
- It can support various discussion “options” and be used during in-person or virtual meetings, and/or phone calls.



STEP 2:

Completed by Parent and Student: Parents and students share reflections about academic progress and social/emotional development and return it to the teacher.

STEP 3:

Completed by Parent and Teacher: The tool has discussion prompts for the parent, teacher, and student (for middle school students) to develop a plan that maximizes each of their roles.

TIPS FOR USING THE PARENT-TEACHER PLANNING TOOL

Establish trust from the start.

Make personal contact with parents at the start of the year to let them know you are excited to teach their child and partner with the family. If possible, do a video call so parents can see you. Ideas for this first phone call:

- Let parents know you value them as partners in learning and encourage them to ask questions and share ideas on what will make the year successful for their child.
- Invite parents to share what their hopes and dreams are for their child.
- End by asking for a second call to talk about how they can support learning at home. Let them know you will share a simple parent-teacher partnership tool so that together, you can create a learning plan for their child.

Help parents understand what your school’s beginning of year benchmark is.

Teachers have a portfolio of diagnostics that they use to differentiate learning and group students. Our public education system does not typically share those assessments with parents in a systemic way, but parents need access to this information to best support your instruction while children are learning remotely at home. The Parent-Teacher Planning Tool is designed to help you share this information in an actionable way.

Be clear about what the benchmark test means about a students’ performance.

To help parents understand where their child is, describe performance in the simplest way possible. Avoid “educator-speak”, like “scale score” and “proficiency”, which can be confusing to parents. Discuss the following:

- At what grade level is the student performing?
- If the student isn’t performing at their grade level, discuss how far the student is from meeting their grade level cutoff. Frame the cutoff as the “goal”.

Reinforce that the school is focused on social/emotional learning as well as academics.

During this time, many parents are understandably concerned about their children staying healthy, both physically and socially/emotionally. As you discuss the life skills section of the tool, mention:

- Academics are just one piece that make up the school experience. Students also learn valuable life skills and academic growth is enhanced when students learn to work together and build relationships. Talk with the parent about how you are incorporating developing these skills into your virtual or in person lessons. Ask about their concerns about the effects school closures had in this area for their child.

- Ask the parent and/or student for their ideas on how to make the most of distance learning based on their experience in the spring. What worked/didn't work for them?

Walk through the tool and review the resources.

The tool is not meant to be a rigid set of steps, but meant to be created by you with input from the parent. It should support what you are likely already doing, like setting goals for students and using effective strategies and relevant resources. The tool helps you engage parents so that they can facilitate learning from home. Although you may not have all lines completed for every student, a few ways to start the discussion include:

- Develop measurable goals or milestones, helping the parent know what their child has to do to meet them, the parent's role in helping them meet them, and how the parent will know when they've been met.
- Develop student-specific learning strategies. These could be academic, such as "Read 3rd grade level informational text (and provide an example of one)", or focused on learning habits, such as "Complete assignments in 20 minute time blocks with a 5 minute "break" in between."

Establish a consistent expectation for communication.

Share your ideas for ongoing communication—how often and the best way to get in touch with you. Many parents don't want to burden teachers with small questions, so setting up a routine or an expectation for how and when to communicate can make everyone's jobs easier.

- Ask about the best way to communicate with the family. It may be email for some, or phone calls and texts for others.
- Identify key points in the year to connect with the parent and review the student's goals and discuss progress. If you use an online portal, make sure parents know how and when to access it so they can monitor their child's grades and assignments in real time.

