

5-Minute Chats with Parents and Caregivers

See also: [5-Minute Chats with Students](#) and [5-Minute Chats with Staff](#)

Personal connection and relationships are critical in being a culturally responsive educator and as a gateway to engagement in learning. This template includes a structure and sample questions for one-on-one chats to open dialogue between school staff and students' family members and caregivers, to begin the process of partnering to support their student's social, emotional, and academic development.

How to use this template: Those who lead a single class should plan to connect with each student's families during the first weeks of school and periodically throughout the year. Those who lead multiple classes can use it to prepare for family conferences, to contact families of their homeroom, or otherwise work with a team of teachers who share students to divide responsibility and make sure each student's family is contacted. Administrators – consider blocking time during in-service for staff to use this resource before the school year begins.

Use this set of questions as a *loose* guide for early conversations – in-person or over the phone. Take notes after you talk to help you retain key details to better support their student and revisit in future conversations.

Preparing to chat: The primary purpose of the chat is to introduce yourself as a caring, supportive representative of the school and let families know that you are interested in knowing them, hearing from them, and working with them to support their student's success. This chat serves to build trust and a positive relationship that will enable deeper partnership further down the road. Be aware that not all families have a positive perception of the school and assume that trust will need to be built over time through many positive interactions like this one.

Initiate – Reach out to families in multiple ways (email, text or messaging app, notes in backpacks) to notify them that you'll be checking in and why. Say something to assure them this will be a low-pressure, get-to-know-you conversation, such as:

- "I hope you can make it to the Open House tonight! I'd like to touch base with all the families to learn more about your student and your hopes for the school year."
- "I'll be giving families of all my homeroom students a call this week to say hello and get to know more about you and your student. Feel free to reply and let me know what time of day is best for you to chat."

Open – Say something that shows you know their student and think highly of them.

- Remind families that you are calling to say hello and get to know them, and that all families are getting a similar call. This can minimize any initial anxiety they may feel about getting a call from school.
- Share something positive that they did or said recently, e.g., "Mark has been volunteering to help me out with setting up lab equipment, and has shown strong leadership with his lab group."
- Mention an interest or activity that they are involved in, e.g., "Gina told us all about spending time at the beach this summer – it sounded like a wonderful time."
- Avoid compliments about appearance, mentioning other students, or very general comments that could be about any student.

Personalize – Ask a question that invites them to tell you what's unique about their student and/or their family, and what their hopes are for this school year.

- "What are some things that ___'s past teachers have done that worked well for them?"
- "What are some of ___'s big goals for this year? What are your hopes for them this year?"
- "Tell me a little about _____. What do I need to know to be a great teacher to them this year?"
- "What are some of the things ___ likes about school? What are some things that have been difficult?"

Invite Engagement – Let them know how they can reach you and describe ways you are hoping to partner with families throughout the school year.

- "The best way to reach me quickly is _____. If you'd like to have a longer conversation about anything, you can _____."
- "You know your child better than anyone, so I'll be reaching back out to you and other families throughout the year to ask for input and advice, or to partner with me to make sure she/he is getting the support she needs to have a great year. What's the best way for me to reach you?"

Close – End on an optimistic, forward-thinking note.

- "It has been a joy talking with you! Thanks for setting aside this time."
- "I'm looking forward to getting to know ___ better and you as well."
- "This conversation has been a big help to me – If anything else comes to mind that you'd like me to know, please don't hesitate to reach out."