

# LAUNCH NEBRASKA



Nebraska Department of Education • September 28, 2020

## *Best Practices for Parent-Teacher Conferences*

Developed with teachers, in conversation with the commissioner





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# **Best Practices for Parent-Teacher Conferences**

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## **Identify and Communicate the Purpose and Outcomes of Conferences during COVID-19**

- Focus on relationship and trust building.
- Seek understanding of social-emotional needs of students and parents and how school systems can support.
- Extend and explain student academic progress, including how unfinished learning is being determined and addressed and how new procedures and processes impact current (and future) learning.
  - » With multiple modes of communication (ex. Class Dojo, Google Classroom, Infinite Classroom), most parents are able to access student data already. Conferences allow an opportunity to explain and go deeper to identify needed support for students, families, and schools.
- Specify supports needed for student success - i.e. what teacher needs from parent/guardian, and what parents/guardians need from teacher. Be specific! (e.g. technology requirements, sample daily schedules/timing, expectations for grading and attendance, etc.).
- For K-3 students, leverage parent-teacher conferences as a way to support implementation of the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act. Communication resources for parents are located on the [Nebraska Reads](#) webpage. Specifically, the [Read-At-Home Plan for Student Success](#) is a great resource and available in English, Spanish, Arabic, Karen, Somali, and Vietnamese.
- For high school students, include a focus on planning transitions to postsecondary education and/or careers. For more information, visit Launch Nebraska's [Transitions Page](#).

## **Best Practices for Conferences during COVID-19**

- Flexibility is key. Allow for multiple times and modes for access to teachers.
  - » (ex. use of virtual platforms, such as Zoom, phone, email)
- Allow flexibility for educators to conduct conferences at home, at school during a dedicated time, etc. Emphasize the importance of parent/family/caregiver communication regardless of how conferences take place.
- Start the conversation with families/caregivers with a simple check-in. "How are you doing during this time?"
- Continue to prioritize safety. If conferences are in-session, ensure communication on safety procedures is consistent with the practices occurring during school.

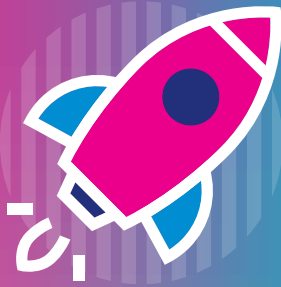
- Prioritize students who are struggling and/or those who are learning virtually. Also, consider prioritizing students with IEPs or 504 plans.
- Create a short video for all parents to access explaining what's happening in your classroom, what you're teaching, overall student performance, and what supports you need.

## **Other Considerations**

- If conferences are being held face-to-face, consider safety precautions that need to be in place. Communicate those expectations in advance (e.g. mask requirements, social distancing, limiting materials that will be handed out, etc.).
- Avoid education jargon.
- Provide translation/interpretation services, if needed.
- Explain objectives and expectations for the session.
- Consider the "Positive - Improvement - Positive" sandwich technique.
- Elevate student voice and reflection and/or consider **student-led conferences**.

## **Additional Resources:**

- Launch Nebraska:
  - » **Teaching and Learning in the 2020-2021 School Year: Student, Family, and Community Engagement**
  - » **Teaching and Learning in the 2020-2021 School Year: Wellbeing and Connection**
- NDE's Family Engagement: <https://www.education.ne.gov/family/families/>
- EduTopia: **5 Strategies for Successful Parent-Teacher Conferences**
- Scholastic: **Ten Tips for Productive Parent Conferences**
- Data Quality Campaign: **Empowering Families and Communities with Data**



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