

What to Expect This School Year

Students benefit when educators and parents work together in partnership. This year we are providing more opportunities than ever before for you to support your child's education.

In addition to your child's classroom teachers, [each student has a mentor](#) – a teacher who has dedicated time weekly to talk one-on-one with your child about their school experience, both academic and otherwise.

Your child's mentor is an additional point of contact who is able to discuss your child's progress. Even more unique this year, you can log on to a new online platform and see everything your student is working on, feedback from their teachers, and goals they're setting with their mentor.

How You Can Support Your Child

With a hands-on project-based curriculum that is focused on skills and critical thinking, students are being asked to engage in classroom work that is more difficult than passively listening to a lecture and memorizing information. When your child has questions – or even complaints – we encourage you to respond in ways that enable you to provide reassurance and encouragement once you hear how your child is learning and growing!

School may not be easy, but we know your children are up for the challenge.

If your child says...

“School is too hard this year”

Challenging work can make students feel uncomfortable, especially if they're used to quickly understanding lessons. But, it can also signal that something is working — like practice and conditioning for a sports team.

We are intentionally going to challenge students. This year, students won't move on whether or not they've passed the test.

Instead, if they don't pass the first time around, they'll have to keep studying. And if they do pass the first time, they can move ahead to the next focus/subject area. Our goal is for every student to master all content.

Possible follow-up questions for parents and caregivers:

- Have you talked to your teacher or mentor about where you are struggling?
- Can you log in to the dashboard and show me which focus area has been tough for you?
- Everything takes practice. What are the cognitive skills that your teachers want you to develop and practice in this project?

If your child says...

“My teacher isn’t teaching us the same as before.”

In our classrooms this year, you won’t always see the teacher standing at the board teaching one lesson to all students at the same time.

Teaching every student in the same way and at a fixed pace leaves some students behind while others get bored. Students may disengage, and they aren’t given the opportunity to build strong learning habits, such as self-awareness, resilience, and perseverance.

This year, students are learning to direct parts of their own learning, taking more time to study or choosing to go ahead or go more deeply into a subject. This doesn’t mean that teachers won’t ever lead whole class discussions – they will, they just won’t do it all the time.

At other times, students can access a range of different learning resources to meet their needs via an online platform, and their teacher will move through the room teaching small groups or one-on-one in ways that might not apply to the whole class.

We expect students may feel as though their teachers aren’t teaching at times. That’s not the case, but it is likely to take some time for students to learn how to benefit from more classroom autonomy.

Possible follow-up questions for parents and caregivers:

- What exactly was your teacher doing in the classroom?
- Did you see your teacher leading a lesson for the whole class or a small group? Or did you see them meeting one-on-one with other students?
- If you needed help, did you ask for it?
- What was your teacher’s response when you asked for help? As an adult, I often have to find answers by myself. Is that what your teacher was encouraging you to do?”
- When you spoke with your teacher, what did you discuss?

If your child says...

“A lot of my grades are in the red, and it is stressing me out”

This year, instead of memorizing a subject then taking a test to get a grade, students are graded based on how well they understand and apply new concepts.

Students will be graded on their cognitive skills, like developing a point of view, selecting relevant sources, and asking questions. Students are not given Ds and Fs. Anything lower than a C- grade is considered “off track” or behind on certain skills or areas, which are shown in red in the online platform.

By knowing where they are “off track,” your child has a better understanding of what they should focus on to pass and master their courses. Students have until the end of the year to work on course grades that are “off track.”

Possible follow-up questions for parents and caregivers:

- Can you show me the specific subject and areas where you are off-track?
- Looking at your cognitive skills, where can you make improvements?
- Which cognitive skills are you doing well with? Tell me why you think you’re good at those skills? Can you give me examples of how you’ve practiced those skills in class?
- How have you been tracking your progress in the subject until now?
- Have you talked to your teacher or mentor about developing a plan to meet these goals?

If your child says...

“I spend more time on a computer than I did in my previous classes.”

In addition to what's being taught by teachers, students have access to learning resources — through the computer and offline — that help accelerate learning. An online platform provides students with learning resources, and allows them to submit assignments, receive feedback from teachers, set goals, and reflect on their learning.

Students do not spend more time online or on computers than is necessary. Teachers only ask students to open their laptops when they are necessary to accomplish a task.

Possible follow-up questions for parents and caregivers:

- What specifically have you been doing on the computer? Setting goals? Taking an assessment? Finding additional resources? Communicating with a classmate?
- Can you log into the platform and show me exactly what you are working on?
- What projects have you been working on during class and how have you been working with classmates?
- Can you show me the checkpoints for a project you're working on?

Unparalleled Access for Parents and Caregivers

See how your child is doing in each class by logging into the dashboard of the learning platform. You can see everything your child sees on the platform, from current assignments to a year-long view of their progress.

Receive SMS/text updates about your child's progress – learn more and sign up at tinyurl.com/family-sms

Understand your child's current projects, performance on tests, and grades. You can track whether your child is completing projects on time and meeting their individual goals — allowing you to support your child's learning.

Speak to your child's mentor who checks in with your child every week about their whole school experience, academic and otherwise. They advocate for your child and provide guidance to help them reach their personal goals.

**Want more information about mentoring, the grading system, online tools or more?
Reach out to your student's mentor, teacher or school leader.**