

Learning Conversations Guide — for use with students, families and carers



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Listening to understand



Parents and families are facing new challenges to support student learning at home, so understanding our learners' contexts is more important than ever. These resources are designed to help you work with your colleagues so that remote and flexible teaching is designed around the needs of students working from home.

In this pack are three resources which will help teachers foster a sense of connectedness and belonging, as everyone makes sense of remote or online learning.

Resource One **'Nine photos about me'**, provides student prompts to take photos - the focus of the prompts and photographs is firmly on the student.

Resource Two **'Three things that matter to me'** is aimed at younger children and prompts them to share what is special or meaningful to the young learner such as special objects and games.

THE AIM OF THESE TWO RESOURCES is to deepen our understanding of learners and their unique contexts, validating and valuing their backgrounds and experiences and what they bring to the learning.

Resource Three **'Five Prompts to support listening to parents and families'** supports a conversation with a parent, other key family member or carer to foster understanding of our family partners, their context and unique needs as adults offering support for their child's learning at home.

Three connected processes to support remote learning (and beyond)

THE AIMS OF THESE THREE CONNECTED PROCESSES, *nine photos about me, three things that matter to me and five prompts to support listening to parents and families* are designed to foster a sense of belonging and connectedness in the current circumstances *and into the future*, and to better understand how to design/co-design for learning, *for and with young people and their families* and to create the conditions for this learning.

While many of us may prefer to be back supporting learners more directly, these processes are designed to help us reach out to, and partner with, learners, families and carers in the current context and beyond.

Who knows, perhaps these processes will reveal aspects of our children and their passions and interests that we can tap into and amplify when we return to school?

We may also forge stronger, more enduring relationships with parents and families, built on mutual understanding and respect.

Connectedness and belonging live in processes like these, they represent a way of relating to others and being in the world.



Nine photos about me

resource #ONE

*Prompts to support deeper understanding of **our students** which informs teaching and learning*

The *Nine photos about me...* prompts are designed to offer teachers insights into their students and their circumstances – *nine windows into their world*. Students may choose to add some text or an audio recording to explain their photos. The teacher may also choose to respond to the prompts and share their photos and explanations with their students. The prompts should be experienced by both learners and teachers as personally meaningful and rewarding, engaging and fun. For teachers, the photos and other learner responses may shine **a brighter light** onto the lives and passions of their learners and strengthen rapport.

The set up for students should be kept simple. They can interpret the prompts in any way that they like – *choose all prompts or just a few that matter most to them*. How they choose to respond and the images they offer are what is important. The images can be from the past or freshly captured. Learner agency, hope and creativity will live large in their photos and are fostered by the process.

Students' and teachers' photos can then support conversations and catch ups with students, offering points of connection and ways to reach out respectfully into each other's experiences, to understand each other a little more. These understandings can help to shape the emphasis and further strengthen the design and co-design, of remote learning experiences.

We encourage you to give it a go. Perhaps starting with one or two learners and your own responses to the prompts, to quite literally 'see' what you might discover.

Learners can interpret the prompts in any way that they like – *choose all prompts or just a few that matter most to them.*



Some options to consider - flexibility is key

The ways in which this offer is taken up could be different for different teachers. It could be adapted or tweaked to reflect different age groups, local circumstances or the characteristics of the school community. Some options to consider:

- ④ a student could share and discuss their photos and responses to the prompts with their teacher via a zoom conversation or phone call, specially set up for that purpose, discussing all nine or just the ones that matter most to the learner;
- ④ the photos and responses could be used to inform regular catch up conversations rather than being the sole focus of the conversation;
- ④ the photos and responses could help shape and guide the co-design of learning and/or focus of learning for different students, creating strong catalysts for individual engagement, learning and exploration, *which will be crucial* for many remote learners;
- ④ students might share and discuss their photos and prompts with their teacher and parent via a Zoom conversation, perhaps using them as a catalyst for understanding and co-designing learning possibilities and commitments;
- ④ a parent might support a younger child to take their photos and perhaps audio record them talking about them, which could then be shared with their teacher;
- ④ younger children might like to take pictures of objects, artefacts, games, books or toys that matter most to them, so the focus of prompts can be varied or reduced – children could then hold these objects as they talk with their teacher;
- ④ Or, adapted in any other way that helps a teacher make sense of and connect with their learners...

Use of these photos and prompts should be guided by imagination and inspiration rather than prescription – opening up windows and glimpses into each other's lives and circumstance to help better understand each other. These insights and understandings should lead to online or remote learning experiences that are authentic and relevant to the lives of young learners, anchored in their passions and interests.

The emphasis of the process offered here is flexibility and adaptability.

And then . . .

Once you have had a go at using photos as the medium for the prompts, perhaps you might open things up further, this could mean, *Nine drawings about me...*, *Nine dances about me...*, *Nine little stories about me...* You might vary the prompts, or enlist the learners to come up with their own prompts or vary the number of prompts, *Six songs about me...* or, *People, pets, places and spaces...* or...



NINE PHOTOS* about me

1. Where I am learning at home...

2. Who I learn most from in my life...

3. What I'm most passionate about...

4. What makes learning easier for me...

5. Where I like to spend a lot of time...

6. What gets in the way of learning?

7. If I could learn anything at all...

8. A time when I was happiest ever!

9. How I'm feeling...

*take a photo that is about you without you in the photo!

Three things that matter to me

Prompts to support deeper understanding of **our students** which informs teaching and learning

The *three things that matter to me*.... prompts are designed to support younger learners as a way to connect with and support conversations with their teacher.



Young learners often engage with the world through their physical senses or forge a strong bond with objects, like a favourite teddy bear or toy, and talking about these 'things' can create strong points of connection with the teacher. Ideally the child will bring and hold their three things, showing and talking about them with the teacher, via a video conferencing platform like Zoom.

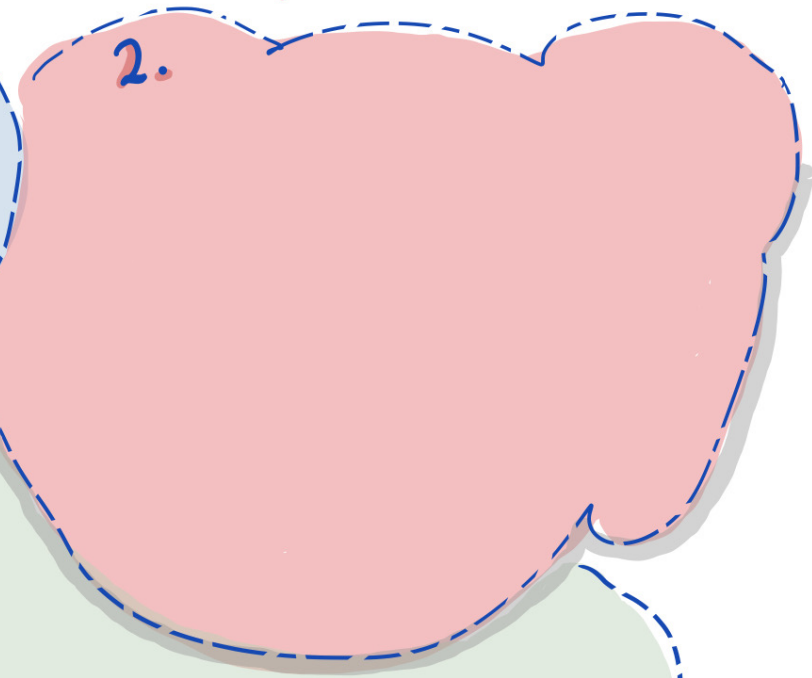
The set up for young learners is simple.

"What three things are really special to you? Maybe you play with these things a lot, you love them, they are really interesting or fun..."

These special objects can open up a space for remote conversations that might otherwise be challenging for young learners, the physical presence of these objects throughout the conversation is designed to reassure them as they engage with their teacher. As most of us know, conversations with young learners can be lateral, spontaneous and unpredictable!

Again, we encourage you to give this process a go. Perhaps beginning with one or two learners that you feel may need a little more care and attention.

three things that matter to me



you might like to write their names or draw them in

Five prompts to support listening to parents and families

resource #THREE

A focus on our **parents, families and carers** → *Reaching out to listen and understand*

The prompts offered in this resource are disarmingly simple. You might have already thought of some similar ways to connect with parents and families. The prompts are designed to support your conversations and shed a little more light on how your parents and families are travelling, uncover what they are noticing about their children and inform your approach to teaching and learning for these students.

We might not always be able to offer our parents and families what they want or need but we can always show that we are listening and that we care and seek to understand them.

The five prompts could be offered via email with the responses in the same form, or during a phone call or zoom chat, or some other way that helps you connect with them. The prompts could be sent ahead of time so the parent or family member knows what the dialogue will be about. This might be particularly important where the parent or carer is from a non-English speaking background and might need someone to support or translate for them or access to an interpreter. This could need to be organised through the school, or family friend and prompts sent ahead of time.

The conversations we have with parents and families to understand their circumstances and needs during this period of remote learning or *learning at home* will be crucial to the learning and well-being of our students and their families.

FIVE PROMPTS :-

to support listening to

parents &
families

What learning are you more comfortable supporting?

What are you noticing about your child or children as learners?

What learning are you finding more challenging to support?

What would you like us to understand about your family's experience of remote learning? What really matters to you?

What are you noticing they are most excited or motivated about learning?



This Learning Conversations Guide has been developed by the team at **EdPartnerships International**: Jayne-Louise Collins, Larissa Raymond, Kathy Winton, Kelli Simmons, Maureen O'Rourke & Peter Burrows www.edpartnerships.edu.au

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