



whole child initiative

CONNECTION POINT

Educational Well-Being and The Whole Child



While much emphasis is placed on academic achievement, educational well-being involves more than academic success. Educational well-being takes into consideration how safe, connected, and supported a child feels in their learning environment and school community. As you might recall from Whole Child training, children who feel safe, relationally connected, and supported are much better able to learn and grow. In addition, educational well-being considers a child's unique strengths and needs related to those skills necessary for learning and overall success in the classroom and in life.

Partnering with your child's teacher(s) is an important and powerful way to ensure children feel safe, connected, and supported as they learn.

One of our favorite Whole Child practices is a **well-being check-in**. Check-ins help us partner with our children and on behalf of our children. Check-ins are a time for parents to connect with their children as well as the other adults in their children's lives—in this case, their teachers! These intentional times ensure children feel seen, heard, and understood—and help us ensure their needs are being met.

Andre Crafford, Education Specialist for Palmer Home for Children, reminds us of the power of a well-being check-in at the middle point of a school year and offers a few tips on how to make this time most effective.

Review your child's graded and non-graded schoolwork from the first semester and search for **strengths and needs**.

- How can you affirm and build on the child's strengths?
- In what areas did your child consistently struggle?
- In what areas did your child consistently experience success?
- In what ways did you notice growth in your child's learning that first semester of this school year? *How might you celebrate this growth?*

Schedule a conference with your child's teacher to discuss ways to support your child in his/her areas of need at home and at school.

- At the conference, be sure to talk about the child's strengths and needs from a holistic perspective - ask how your child is doing physically, socially, emotionally and educationally in his/her school environment.
- Review schoolwork, test scores, and grades. Be sure to discuss any concerns you have about your child's progress so you and the teacher can work as a team to help your child.
- Discuss what could be used to improve learning experience, such as a tutor, additional organization tools, or setting designated benchmarks for your child's progress.
- Develop a plan together **before you leave the meeting**.
- Ask the teacher about any upcoming class projects for your child, like a book report, science fair, or large school project. Mark these due dates on a calendar so you can provide support for your child as they complete those tasks.



Check in with your child to see how he/she is feeling about school.

- What is your child's experience of school? Does your child enjoy school, or does he/she experience anxiety, fear or worries about school?
- Assess for relational support and emotional safety at school. Ask about your child's relationship with teachers and peers. Who are the people your child trusts?
- A mental health check-in is extremely important for your child's well-being. Unmonitored stress can build up, which affects every aspect of your child's life: sleep, behavior, grades, physical health, interactions, and relationships with others. Use this time to share with your child ways to cope with stress in helpful ways, and remind them you will be right there with them, no matter what!

We look forward to seeing all God will do this year in the lives of the children in your life, and we also anticipate all the ways He will challenge and grow you as caregivers this year, too!

