



Our Future:
Built Better Together

Gracious Professionalism[®] **Check-In**

Staying connected remotely

At the heart of *FIRST* are the philosophies of *Gracious Professionalism*[®] and *Coopertition*[®] which is our embodiment of social, emotional learning. These *FIRST* Philosophies are put into practice through problem solving, friendly competition and working together towards solutions as part of a team. This ethos was developed by [Dr. Woodie Flowers](#), distinguished professor at MIT whose popular course “Introduction of Design Manufacturing” would influence the development of *FIRST* Robotics Competition along with Dean Kamen in 1992.



Purpose

Gracious Professionalism Check-In is a template for meetings that coaches or teachers can use with their *FIRST* students. This is a way to ensure all students have a platform to share and can be heard. These check-ins are meant to be intentional to keep students connected to their *FIRST* family.

They are helpful for:

1. Building relationships with students on your team or in your classroom.
2. Expressing that as a mentor, your students matter to you and you are their advocate.
3. Giving opportunity for student voice and encourages ownership.

Composition

There are many of variables that can determine the exact agenda of a *Gracious Professionalism* Check-in, but the basic components will be the same whether it's your first time or your tenth time.

Set the tone. Meeting with the coach or teacher can feel like being called into the principal's office. Alleviate any anxiety and dispel assumptions by beginning with the purpose of the meeting.

Connect. This part isn't rocket science— ask questions to better understand challenges they are dealing with and what motivates them. This is a good time to share specific praise and give positive feedback.

Invite their insight and/or feedback. For many of you, this is where you might spend most of your time during this meeting. Get their perspective on how things are functioning for them in their new normal. Students might be reluctant to be fully honest, *remember to stay in listening mode*. Resist the urge to problem-solve, defend, refute, or explain yourself. Here are some tips for [promoting student voice](#).



Open it up. Ask if there's anything else they'd like to discuss.

Wrap up. Thank them for their time, share your next steps, and restate how you plan to use the information. Lastly, share a specific appreciation for their contributions to the team.

Questions to Ask

Core Value	Sample Questions
Discovery	<p>Why did you join your <i>FIRST</i> team or take a robotics/engineering class?</p> <p>What's your favorite thing about being on a <i>FIRST</i> team?</p> <p>What's a new skill you would like to learn to contribute to the team?</p>
Innovation	<p>If you were the coach or teacher, what's one thing you would do differently?</p> <p>Have you seen someone being innovative to tackle the challenge of working remotely?</p> <p>How have you been innovative in learning remotely? List a way you have had to be innovative to do x,y,z.</p>
Impact	<p>If you could fix any process, what would it be and why?</p> <p>What's something about our Core Values that you love?</p> <p>What's something that has inspired you recently? Why?</p>
Inclusion	<p>What are you doing to help your parents, siblings, or others get through this difficult time?</p> <p>How are you feeling about the world, yourself, or the future during the crisis?</p> <p>How could you reach out to others to make them feel included during this challenging time?</p>
Teamwork	<p>What is a goal for you have for our team this year?</p> <p>What norms should the class or team follow as you work together remotely?</p> <p>How can you collaborate with team remotely on?</p>
Fun	<p>What is something new you have learned to do?</p> <p>If you could have a concert in your living room what band would you want to play?</p> <p>- <i>Keep these types of questions outside of typical questions about team dynamics or robotics.</i></p>
TIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Remember to keep the meeting short – no more than 15 minutes. ♥ Give them voice and choice in shaping your new ways of working and being together. ♥ If students do not want to talk, consider sharing a meaningful life story to show you are compassionate about what challenges they might be experiencing.

Resources

[Coping with Stress during the Pandemic](#) – from the CDC

[Well-being and Connection During COVID-19](#) – Colorado Department of Education.

[Emotional Health Check-Ins During COVID-19](#) – Boys and Girls Club

