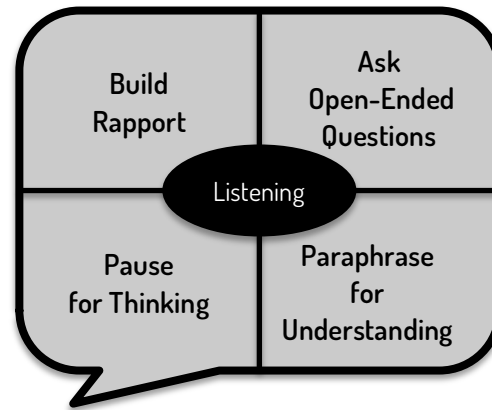


# Conferencing Communication Skills

**OVERVIEW:** The goal of student conferencing is to provide a structure that allows students to reflect, wonder, problem solve and think for themselves. Each of the skills below plays a critical role in creating the conditions necessary for students to practice and develop important social, emotional, and learning skills including: self-management, social and self-awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills.

## Listening

In order to Build Rapport, Paraphrase for Understanding, Pause for Thinking, and Ask Open-Ended Questions. This requires attending fully to the speaker, concentrating on what is being said, as well as being mindful of non-verbal communications.



## Building Rapport

**Purpose:** When students feel safe and valued they are in an ideal emotional state for thinking and learning.

**How To:** Use both verbal and non-verbal communication to build rapport and establish relational trust.

Nonverbal:

- Position yourself in a non-threatening way: side-by-side or kitty corner and at the same level as the student.
- Keep your facial expressions interested and friendly or flat and neutral.

Verbal:

- Keep your tone light and positive, or calm and unemotional.
- Make simple statements or ask questions that communicate you are tuned into the student and care about their academic and personal success.

## Paraphrasing for Understanding

**Purpose:** To make sure you accurately understand a student's thinking or reasoning while simultaneously communicating that you are listening and want to understand them.

**How To:** Make a statement that summarizes what you are hearing and observing. When appropriate, use language, vocabulary, or phrasing that is different to help elevate the student's thinking.

## Pausing for Thinking

**Purpose:** To provide "thinking time" for students so they can process, clarify, and develop their own ideas. To provide thinking time for you - sending the message that you respect what they have to say and to give yourself some time to think before paraphrasing and questioning.

**How To:** Punctuate questions or paraphrases with 3-5 seconds of silence. Allow silence to linger—resist the urge to fill it with a different question, comment, or directive.

## Asking Open-ended Questions

**Purpose:** To ensure students think for themselves and practice the mental skills necessary to develop self-discipline. To communicate to students that you believe they have something smart to say.

**How To:** Ask a question that pushes the student to clarify his/her thinking, self-reflect, problem solve, and/or plan next steps.