

Using the Conference Manager to schedule Virtual Conferences

The Conference Manager that supports the scheduling of parent-teacher conferences that involve a web-based video platform, such as Zoom, Google Meet, Skype and Microsoft Teams. To be clear upfront, the Conference Manager does not provide the video-conferencing platform, rather we allow you to schedule and launch video conferences that use the video software the school is already using.

Important to know before you schedule Virtual Conferences

There are many factors that can impact the successful use of video conferencing software between teachers and parents. This is particularly true when teachers are conducting conferences within a school or district firewall and the parent is in a home or business location. **Prior to conducting your virtual conferences, we recommend doing the following:**

- Consult with your school or district IT personnel on how to ensure trouble free web-based video conferencing between teacher and parent
- Check to see if your video conferencing platform has its meeting URLs expire after a defined period of time. Ensure each teacher creates their meeting URL and enters it in their Conference Manager MY PROFILE within a time period that ensures the URLs are valid during virtual parent-conferences. Because the Conference Manager only sends the meeting URL to the parent when the teacher clicks the START NOW button in their schedule, meeting URLs in the teacher profile can be entered or changed up to the moment the teacher starts hosting a conference.
- In relation to the above, and applicable to those schools and districts that use G Suite for Education, we recommend that the meeting URL in the teacher profile be created by each individual teacher and that nicknames not be given to these meetings. We have found that Google Meet appointments, created through the G Suite calendar appointment work best and should be set for the day of conferences or set up as a recurring appointment on each of the days conferences occur. The time slot does not need to span the full time period conference are occurring on.
- Teachers should test their meeting URL in advance of scheduled conferences. Ideally the test should occur with the teacher in the location they will be conducting conferences and the test involve connecting with someone who is in a remote home or office location.

The Conference Manager provides the means by which parents receive the link that is created by the meeting platform used by the teacher. Those links are subject to whatever restrictions or limitations exist with the web-based video platform you use. Some school jurisdictions configure their firewall to block certain connections. The ability to change those restrictions reside with the provider of the platform and/or those who manage the technology for the school, but are beyond the control of SchoolSoft.

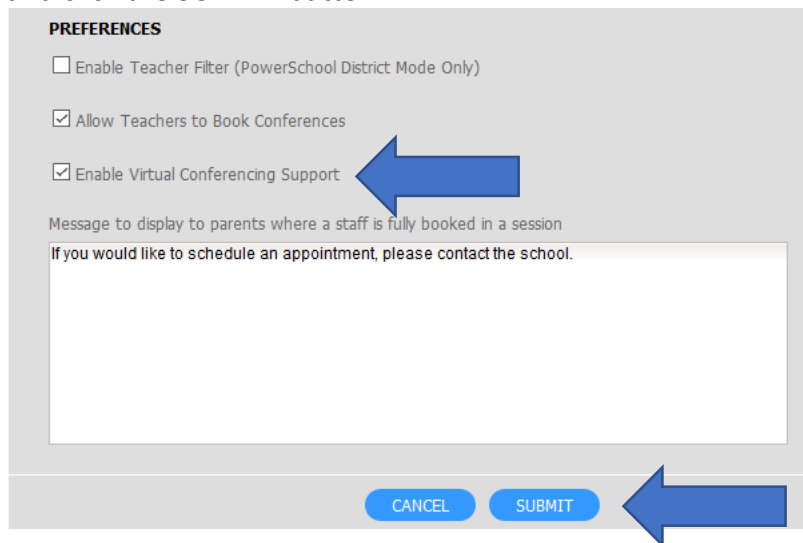
The steps below are important in configuring the Conference Manager for Virtual Conferences.

1. Turning the Virtual Conferences Feature On

The Conference Manager system admin at the school clicks on the SCHOOL PROFILE tab



and scrolls down to preferences and must check “Enable Virtual Conferencing Support” and click the SUBMIT button.

A form titled 'PREFERENCES' with a light gray background. It contains several checkboxes: 'Enable Teacher Filter (PowerSchool District Mode Only)' (unchecked), 'Allow Teachers to Book Conferences' (checked), and 'Enable Virtual Conferencing Support' (checked). Below these is a text area for a message to parents, containing the text 'If you would like to schedule an appointment, please contact the school.' At the bottom right, there are two buttons: 'CANCEL' and 'SUBMIT'. A blue arrow points to the 'SUBMIT' button. Another blue arrow points to the 'Enable Virtual Conferencing Support' checkbox.

2. Setting-up the Teacher Profile for Virtual Conferences

In order for a teacher to hold a video conference they must set up a specific meeting in the video application (e.g. Google Meet) used by the school. The specific URL for the video meeting used by the teacher now needs to be added to the teacher’s profile. It is important to note that for each teacher only one video meeting (and, therefore, one URL) is used for all parent meetings. This specific URL is copied into the teacher’s profile. This step can be completed by each teacher or can be done by the SchoolSoft System Admin or Office Admin user on the teachers’ behalf. It is assumed that the teacher or office staff are familiar with the video conferencing software used by the school to create a meeting and copy the URL specific to that meeting.

- a. If the school decides that teachers are putting the meeting URL into their profile then the teacher logs into the Conference Manager and clicks the MY PROFILE tab copies and pastes the URL into the VIRTUAL CONFERENCE URL field as shown below. The teacher then clicks submit to save that information to their profile.

MY CONFERENCES MY PROFILE

My Profile

Edit the information below, then submit your changes:

STAFF INFORMATION

First Name: Jane
Last Name: Barnett
Mrs. (dropdown)
Username (used for log in): jbarnett@schoolsoft.com
Password: *****
CHANGE PASSWORD (button)
Email Address: jbarnett@schoolsoft.com

OTHER INFORMATION

Staff/Teaching Assignment: Gr. 3
Conference Location or NA: Room 21
Virtual Conference URL: https://meet.google.com/dzo-fwar-pvs
I have read the [Terms and Conditions](#) (checkbox checked)

SUBMIT (button)

If the SchoolSoft System Admin or Office Admin is entering this information on behalf of staff rather than the teachers themselves, the System Admin or Office Admin user logs in and clicks on the STAFF tab and then the EDIT button to the right of the teacher the meeting URL applies to and then the URL is pasted in the profile for that staff member.

Once a URL is added to a teacher's profile you will notice a small VC badge beside their name as shown below. This provides a quick visual means of confirming which teachers have a URL entered in their staff profile. **If the URL is not entered, the teacher will not be able to initiate a video conference as detailed at the end of this document.** We strongly recommend that the system admin confirms that each teacher involved in conferences has the VC badge showing well in advance of the parent-teacher conferences.

License expires in 624 days

Staff

Add, edit or delete staff members using the list below. You can also view all current teaching teams.

ADD STAFF MEMBER CREATE TEACHING TEAM VIEW TEACHING TEAM

VIEW STAFF LIST

NAME	TEAM	TEACHING ASSIGNMENT	LOCATION
Acorn, Chester VC		Kindergarten	Room 2
Admin, Test		System Admin	NA
Anderson, Kevin VC		Gr. 5	Room 222
Armstrong, Sharon VC		Fine Arts	Drama Room
Barb, Rhianna		Gr. 4	115

3. Configuring Conference Sessions for Virtual Conferences

For the most part, setting up a Conference Round that will involve virtual conferences is much like regular conferences. However, there are a few actions taken by the System Admin that are specific to virtual conferences. These specific set-up actions are detailed below.

- a. As usual, the System Admin clicks on the CONFERENCES tab and clicks the CREATE ROUND button.

License expires in 624 days

Conference Manager Administration

Create a new conference round or edit an existing conference from the lists below.

CREATE NEW CONFERENCE ROUND

- b. In the initial configuration of the Conference Round we recommend that you include information about the virtual conferences for parents in the NOTE TO PARENTS field. We recommend you do this even if you have already sent out a separate communication to parents indicating the upcoming round of conference will be done using video conferencing software.

Edit Conference Round

TITLE
Enter a title for this Round to keep yourself organized. This is only for administrative purposes and is not visible to parents.
Virtual Conferences Using Google Meet

PURPOSE
Select the purpose of the conferences. This will customize the parent notification emails when the round is about to open.
Parent / Teacher Conferences

NOTE TO PARENTS (Optional)
The text you enter here is viewed by ALL parents each time they log into the Conference Manager. This field is optional.
Because of ongoing concerns about the spread of COVID-19, Memorial School is using Google Meet to conduct parent-teacher interviews. We are asking you to schedule your conference time and then be at an internet-connected device that is suitable for video conferencing. The teacher send an email which will be used to initiate your interview at your designated time.

PARENT ACCESS
Select the date and time you want parents to START booking their conferences.
Date Open to Parents (mm/dd/yyyy) 06/10/2020 Time Open to Parents 9:00 AM
Select the date and time you want parents to STOP booking conferences. Note: Once the system is closed, parents can still login to view, print and cancel bookings.
Date Closed to Parents (mm/dd/yyyy) 06/10/2020 Time Closed to Parents 11:30 PM

- c. After defining the Conference Round, you will be prompted to create one or more Conference Sessions. The first conference session action will be to give consideration to using the TRAVEL TIME setting to provide some transition time between conference for the teacher.

SESSION INFO
A Conference Round is made up of one or more Conference Sessions.
Select a date and include any additional information needed to supplement the date. This information is displayed to parents in a drop down menu.

Date (mm/dd/yyyy) 06/19/2020 Additional Information (eg. Gr. 4 - 6 (5:00 to 8:00)) (Optional) Virtual Conferences

Start Time 12:00 PM Finish Time 3:55 PM Interview Duration (Mins) 13 Travel Time (Mins) 2 Number of Students per Conference

VIRTUAL CONFERENCING
 Allow Teachers to use Virtual Conferencing

PARENT COMMENTS
By default the system allows parents to include comments or questions when they make a booking. Remove the checkmark if you prefer that parents not have the ability to include questions or comments.
 Allow Parents to Add Comments to Conference Booking

Unlike face-to-face conferences, when a video-based conferences does not start on time, there is no easy way for a parent to know if the teacher is delayed by another parent or if they have forgotten the conference. Although this setting is optional, we recommend setting the Travel time to 2 or more minutes to help ensure all parent conferences start on time. In the screen shot above, the schools has planned 4 conferences per hour, with each being 13 minutes in duration and 2 minutes of transition time between conferences.

- d. The “Allow teacher to use Virtual Conferencing” checkbox must be checked for each Conference Session that will involve virtual conferences. It is also important to confirm the “Allow Parents to Add Comments” checkbox is checked, as parents are prompted to provide a phone number that could be used as back-up should technical issues prevent the video conference.

SESSION INFO

A Conference Round is made up of one or more Conference Sessions.

Select a date and include any additional information needed to supplement the date. This information is displayed to parents in a drop down menu.

Date (mm/dd/yyyy) -

Additional Information (eg, Gr. 4 - 6 (5:00 to 8:00)) (Optional)

Start Time Finish Time Interview Duration (Mins) Travel Time (Mins) Number of Students per Conference

VIRTUAL CONFERENCING

Allow Teachers to use Virtual Conferencing

PARENT COMMENTS

By default the system allows parents to include comments or questions when they make a booking. Remove the checkmark if you prefer that parents not have the ability to include questions or comments.

Allow Parents to Add Comments to Conference Booking

- e. We recommend using the **SESSION NOTICE FOR PARENTS** to provide important information related to the virtual conferences, as illustrated below. Remember each session can contain its own Session Note to Parents, so you may be duplicating this information for each session.

PARENT COMMENTS

By default the system allows parents to include comments or questions when they make a booking. Remove the checkmark if you prefer that parents not have the ability to include questions or comments.

Allow Parents to Add Comments to Conference Booking

STAFF BREAKS

By default the system gives staff the ability to reserve time blocks to schedule a break. Remove the checkmark if you prefer staff NOT to schedule their own breaks.

Allow Staff to Schedule their own Breaks

MAX # OF BOOKINGS A PARENT CAN MAKE WITH EACH TEACHER

By default the system does not limit the number of bookings a parent can make with each staff member. By selecting a specific number, you can limit the number of bookings a parent can make with each teacher. If you set this to "1", the system will limit the parents to 1 booking per child with each teacher. If the total number of conferences that can be booked by a parent is limited in the configuration of the ROUND, then that limit will take precedence over this setting.

Number of bookings a parent can make per teacher

Session Notice for Parents (Optional)

Viewed by parents each time they select this session.

You will receive an email containing a link that will be used to initiate the parent conference at (or close to) the start time of your conference. As a back-up, should technical issues arise, please enter into the comments field in the booking form the best phone number for the teacher to reach you at.

ADD STAFF MEMBERS



How a Teacher Initiates a Virtual Parent-Teacher Conference

On the day that conferences occur and in advance of the conferences commencing, we recommend that teachers login confirm the meeting software is functioning properly by entering into the meeting using the URL specified in their MY PROFILE. This can be easily done by having the teacher log into the Conference Manager, select the session that corresponds to the conferences about to occur and then click the virtual conference Link.

My Conferences

To view a list of current conference bookings, please select a session from the dropdown below.
To cancel a booking, or for additional information, please contact **Heather Fox** for further information.

VIEW A SESSION

Available conference sessions

Print Print (No Comments)

Friday June 19 - Virtual Conferences

Conferences are 10 minutes long with 5 minutes in between.

Virtual Conference Link: <https://meet.google.com/sau-fntc-toc>

AVAILABLE	TIME	STUDENT NAME	PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME	COMMENT	MEETING
	12:00 PM	Bob McNicol	Cam McNicol		START NOW
	12:15 PM	Lawson Parker	Patricia Dottore		START NOW
	12:30 PM	Jeff Green	Ted Green		START NOW

To initiate the first conference, the teacher clicks on the MY CONFERENCES is the applicable Conference Session. The schedule of conferences booked will be displayed.

To start a conference, the teacher clicks the START NOW button beside the conference that is scheduled to commence at that time. This will cause the CONFERENCE MANAGER to send an email to the parent informing them their conference is ready to start and includes a link to the meeting. Below is a sample of the content contained in the email to parents.

From: appointments@schoolsoft.com

Sent: June 10, 2020 8:19 PM

To: theparent@schoolsoft.com

Subject: Your Parent-Teacher Conference is starting NOW

School: Memorial School

Teacher(s): Mr. Acorn

Date and Time: Wednesday June 17, 2020 at 9:00 AM - 9:13 AM

Your Parent-Teacher conference is ready to begin. Please click the following URL to join the conference.

<https://meet.google.com/qan-pqzh>

By only providing the URL to the parent at that time, it helps assure confidentiality by preventing one parent from entering into an online conference early and becoming part of a meeting that is already in progress. While some video conferencing applications have controls over who can enter a meeting, others do not, and so we have tried to take an approach that helps maintain the highest level of confidentiality.

After a parent meeting concludes, the teacher should click the button that ends or hangs up the meeting and then initiate the next conference at the designated time by clicking the START NOW button for that specific meeting.

This process is repeated for each parent-conference listed in the schedule.

How a Parent Joins A Conference

As mentioned above, parents receive an email with a link in it that must be clicked on to have the parent join the virtual conference. To ensure parents are informed in advance of the conferences we recommend you make parents aware of the following parent resource video, located at: <https://www.schoolsoft.com/virtual-conferences-parent-resource-page/>.