

Five Simple Steps to a Successful Parent-Teacher Conference

Innovations that Nurture Success in Parent Involvement to Reach Excellence

Just showing up for a parent-teacher conference tells the teacher that you support your child's learning. Here are five suggestions about what to discuss with the teacher:

- 1. Learn** about your child's progress. It's important to find out how your child is progressing academically as well as how he interacts with his peers, if he participates in class and if he is well behaved. Listen carefully to what your child's teacher says, and ask yourself if you note similar patterns at home. If your child is in middle or high school, ask about whether he is on track for college.
- 2. Share** your insights with your child's teacher. A conference is a good opportunity to hear from your child's teacher, but it's also a perfect time to share your perspective. Remember, you know your child best. You can give the teacher valuable information that could help your child learn more effectively.
- 3. Be informed** about the achievement scores for your child's school. In this age of standards and accountability, test scores are increasingly important. If the scores are strong, ask how the school is working to keep students on track. If the scores are low, ask what the school is doing to raise achievement and how you can support learning at home.
- 4. Discuss** your child's strengths and challenges. Through comparing areas where your child excels with areas in need of improvement, you can identify ways to support your child's learning at home.
- 5. Ask** questions. This is one of the most important aspects of a successful conference. Here are some key questions to get you started:
 - **How much time should my child spend on homework each night?**
Does the teacher's estimate match with what you see your child doing at home? If it doesn't, share your observations with your child's teacher to generate possible solutions.
 - **How can I reinforce classroom lessons at home?**
Ask the teacher about activities, games or other strategies that you can use to further your child's learning at home.
 - **How can I stay connected?**
Find out ways to keep track of your child's progress, assignments and activities. Is there a system in place for parent communication or involvement? Discuss the best ways to stay current.

Parent-Teacher Conference: Questions to Ask

Good questions to ask are during the conference:

- Is my child in different groups for different subjects? Why?
- How well does my child get along with others?
- What are my child's best and worst subjects?
- What are my child's strengths?
- What are my child's perceived challenges?
- Is my child working up to his or her ability?
- Does my child participate in class discussions and activities?
- Has my child missed any classes other than ones I contacted the school about?
- Have you noticed any sudden changes in the way my child acts?
 - For example, have you noticed any squinting, tiredness or moodiness that might be a sign of physical or other problems?
- What kinds of tests are being done? What do the tests tell about my child's progress?
- How does my child handle taking tests?



TIPS | for parents Parent-Teacher Conferences

During the school year, teachers will invite you to come to parent-teacher meetings (also called conferences). This is very common in the United States. You can also ask for a conference any time.

Getting Started

What: The conference is a meeting between you and your child's teacher.

When: Your child's teacher will contact you to set up a meeting time.

Why: The conference gives you a chance to talk with your child's teacher.

Questions

What if I work during the day?

Let the teacher know you can only go to conferences at night.

What if I don't speak English?

You have the right to have an interpreter attend the conference. You can also bring a friend or relative to interpret. It is important that your child does not translate for you.

What will we talk about?

Your child's teacher will probably talk about your child's grades, classwork, homework, and behavior.

What will I learn?

You will learn more about your child's classes, and find out if your child is having any problems.

What will the teacher ask me?

Teachers like to learn about students from their parents. No one knows your child better than you do. You can help the teacher by talking about:

- What your child likes to do
- Events that may affect your child (such as a new baby, divorce or death)
- Special medical or learning needs

Things to Remember

If you are invited to a conference, it doesn't mean your child is in trouble! Teachers try to meet with all parents.

You and the teacher both want the very best for your child. You can help your child by working together as a team.



Parent-Teacher Conference Checklists

Before the conference

- Ask your child how she feels about school.
- Ask your child if there is anything that he wants you to talk about with his teacher.
- Tell your child that you and the teacher are meeting to help her.
- Make a list of topics that you want to talk about with the teacher.
- Prepare a list of questions such as:
 1. What are my child's strongest and weakest subjects?
 2. Does my child hand homework in on time?
 3. Does my child participate in class?
 4. Does my child seem happy at school?
 5. What can I do at home to help?

During the conference

- Be on time (or early) for the meeting.
- End the meeting on time. Other parents will probably have a conference after yours.
- Relax and be yourself.
- Stay calm during the conference.
- Ask the most important questions first.
- If your child receives special services such as English classes, ask about your child's progress in those classes.
- Ask for explanations of anything you don't understand.
- Ask your child's teacher for ways that you can help your child at home.
- Thank the teacher.

After the conference

- Talk about the conference with your child.
- Talk about the positive points, and be direct about problems.
- Tell your child about any plans you and the teacher created.
- Keep in touch with the teacher during the school year.

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