

## 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

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### 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?



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## Parent's Rights

Parents and guardians of enrolled students have the right to be included in the educational process and to have access to the system on behalf of their children.

### **Classroom Observations**

Parents have the right to visit their child's classroom to observe activities. The time and date of the visitation must be arranged in advance with the school.

### **Teacher Conferences**

Parents have the right to request a conference with their child's teacher(s) or the principal. Parents should contact the school to schedule a date and time convenient to all participants.

### **Volunteering**

Parents have the right to volunteer their time and resources for the improvement of school facilities and programs. Parents should contact the school to determine the terms and conditions of this service.

### **Student Attendance**

Parents have the right to be notified in a timely manner if their child is absent from school without permission.

### **Student Testing**

Parents have the right to be notified of their child's performance on standardized and state-wide tests and the school's ranking on these tests. (Under other state law, parents may request that their child not participate in the statewide tests.)

### **School Selection**

Parents have the right to request that their child be enrolled in any school in the district. The district is not compelled to grant the request.

### **Safe School Environment**

Parents have the right and are entitled to the assurance of a safe and supportive learning environment for their child.

### **Curriculum Materials**

Parents have the right to examine the curriculum materials of the class or classes in which their child is enrolled.

### **Student Academic Progress**

Parents have the right to be informed of their child's academic progress in school and of the persons to contact if they wish more information or assistance with their child.

**Student Records**

Parents have the right to access their child's records and to question anything they feel is inaccurate or misleading or an invasion of privacy. Parents have the right to a timely response from the school district about their questions.

**Standards**

Parents have the right to receive information regarding the academic standards their child is expected to meet.

**School Rules**

Parents have the right to receive written notification of school rules, attendance policies, dress codes, and procedures for school visitations.

**Psychological Testing**

Parents have the right to receive information on all psychological testing recommended for their child.

**Councils and Committees**

Parents have the right to participate as a member of a parent advisory committee, school-site council, or site-based management leadership team in accordance with established rules and regulations for membership. Parents also have the right to attend at least two meetings per year scheduled by the school to get information on school issues and activities.

**Policy Development**

Parents and guardians have the right and should be given the opportunity to work in a mutually supportive and respectful partnership with the school to help their child succeed. The governing board of each school district shall adopt a jointly created policy that outlines how parents and guardians, school staff, and students may share the responsibility for the intellectual, physical, emotional, social development, and well-being of their students. This policy shall include, but is not limited to:

1. How parents/guardians and the school will help students to achieve academic and other standards.
2. How the school will provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive learning environment to all students enrolled.
3. What parents and guardians can do to support their child's learning environment, including but not limited to:

Monitoring school attendance

Monitoring homework completion

Encouraging participation in extracurricular activities

Monitoring and regulating television viewing

Planning and participating in activities at home supportive of classroom activities

Volunteering at school

Participating in decision-making processes at school