

Parent – Teacher Conferences: A Tip Sheet for Parents

You and your child's school have something in common: you both want your child to learn and do well. Parent-teacher conferences are a great way to share important information about your child's talents and needs. This tip sheet provides suggestions to make the most of parent-teacher conferences so that everyone wins, *especially your child*.

What should you expect?

A two-way conversation. Like all good conversations, parent-teacher conferences are best when both people talk *and* listen. The conference is a time for you to learn about your child's progress in school. But it is also a time for the teacher to learn about what your child is like at home. When you tell the teacher about your child's skills, interests, needs, and dreams, the teacher can help your child more.

Emphasis is on learning. Successful parent-teacher conferences focus on how well your child is doing in school and discuss how your child can do even better. To prepare for the conversation, look at your child's homework, tests, and notices before the conference. Be sure to bring a list of questions that you would like to ask.

Opportunities and challenges. Just like you, teachers want your child to succeed. You will probably hear positive feedback about your child's progress *and* areas for improvement. Be prepared by thinking about your child's strengths and challenges beforehand. Be ready to ask questions about ways that you and the teacher can help your child with some of their challenges.

Conference – Checklist

Before:

- ☐ Schedule a time to meet. If you can't make it, ask the teacher about other times.
- ☐ Review your child's work, grades, and progress reports.
- ☐ Talk with your child about his or her progress in school and ask if there is anything that they would like you to discuss with their teacher.
- ☐ Jot down everything that you would like to discuss - (questions, observations, things going on at home, etc.).
- ☐ Think about your child's strengths and weaknesses.

During:

- ☐ Arrive on time or even early.
- ☐ Bring paper and pen to take notes.
- ☐ Be positive.
- ☐ Be open to feedback and suggestions from the teacher.
- ☐ Keep your emotions under control.
- ☐ Stay on topic.
- ☐ Discuss ways you can assist your child at home.

After:

- ☐ Tell your child what was talked about – the positives and areas they need to work on.
- ☐ Follow-up.

What should you talk about?

Progress. Find out how your child is doing by asking questions like: Is my child performing at grade level? How is he or she doing compared to the rest of the class? What do you see as his or her strengths? What areas still need improvement?

Assignments and assessments. Ask to see examples of your child's work. Ask how the teacher determines grades (ex. Tests are 30%, Homework 30%, Quizzes 30%, and Projects 10%).

Share your thoughts about your child. Be sure to share your thoughts and feelings about your child. Tell the teacher what you think are your child's strengths. Explain what he or she needs more help with.

Support learning at home. Ask what you can do at home to help your child learn. Ask if the teacher knows of other programs or services in the community that could also help your child.

Support learning at school. Find out what services are available at the school to help your child. Ask how the teacher will both challenge your child and support your child when he or she needs it.

How should you follow up?

Make a plan. Write down the things that you and the teacher will each do to support your child. You can do this during the conference or after. Write down what you will do, when, and how often. Make plans to check-in with the teacher in the coming months.

Schedule another time to talk. Communication should go both ways. Ask the teacher the best time and way to communicate with them. And don't forget to let the teacher know the best way to contact you, too – by email, phone, in person, notes, or Portal. Make a plan that works for both of you. Be sure to schedule at least one more time to talk in the next few months.

Talk to your child. The parent-teacher conference is all about your child, so don't forget to include them. Share what you learned with your child. Show him or her how you will help with learning at home. Ask for their input and suggestions.

Helpful Questions

What skills and knowledge is my child expected to master this year? Is he/she performing on grade level?

How will my child be evaluated? How are grades determined in your class? What kind of information do you use to evaluate students?

How do you accommodate for differences in learning? What if my child is a slower learner and falls behind, or is a fast learner and is bored?

How are secondary students prepared for further learning after high school? Are students encouraged to think about a wide variety of career interests?

What can I do to stay more involved in my child's academic progress? What things can I do at home to support my child's academic progress?