

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Tips

Conferences offer an opportunity for you to find out how your children are getting along with classmates, how they are progressing in school and what you can do at home to build on strengths and overcome challenges. Parents will have scheduled conferences with elementary teachers. At the middle school and high school levels, time with each teacher will be brief, but parent participation is an important way you can show support and schedule an individual conference if needed. The following questions will help guide your teacher conference and (with some minor changes) can be used for students at all levels:

Before the Conference

- Decide what you want to ask the teacher and write the questions down.
- Consider making a list for your child's teacher of things that will help create a better understanding of your child; for example, family conflicts, feelings about school, hobbies, special health problems.
- Ask your child some questions: what's her favorite subject? what's her least favorite? what do you want me to tell your teacher?
- Be on time. Write down the time of your appointment and arrive promptly. If you can't make the conference as scheduled, call and notify the teacher.

During the conference

- If you have a specific point to discuss or have a complaint, listen to the teacher's point before criticizing.
- The teacher may have some questions too -- not trying to pry into your personal life, but only to obtain information that will help her or him to work better with your child.
- Leave promptly to allow other parents to have as much time as you had with the teacher. If you feel the need to continue, schedule another conference with the teacher.



Here are 10 questions you might ask the teacher:

1. **What will you cover in this grade** or subject this year?
2. How are you **addressing state and district standards**?
3. What are your **expectations for homework**? Has my child missed any of his/her assignments so far?
4. How are my child's **work habits**? Does he/she use his/her time in class well?
5. Does my child **read at the level** you would expect for this grade?
6. Is my child **able to do the math** you would expect for a student in this grade?
7. Is my child in **different groups for different subjects**?
8. Has my child **missed any classes** other than the ones I contacted the school about?
9. Does my child **qualify for any special programs** -- for example, gifted and talented, English as a second language, or learning disabilities?
10. Does my child **get along well** with the other students in this class?
11. **What can I do at home to help** my child be more successful at school?

The key to a successful conference parents and teachers agree, is two-way communication. By exchanging information, parent and teachers can set the stage for a great school year.

You can also help us by being prepared to discuss the general area of your child's health, sleep habits, special interests and problems, and reactions to school, plus any other information which only you have but which could help the school. We hope these conferences are very productive!

Other Resources

Here are links to other resources you might find helpful:

- National Education Association; "How to Make Parent-Teacher Conferences Work for Your Child" at: www.nea.org/helpfrom/connecting/tools/ptconf.html
- The Learning Network
 - "Ten Tips for a Successful Parent-Teacher Conference" at: www.familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,1-9757-0-7,00.html
 - "The Parent-Teacher Conference: Five Must-Ask Questions" at: www.familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,1-2499,00.html
- Educational Resources Information Center; "The Parent-Teacher Conference" at: <http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/guides/uft/conference.html>