

Report to PARENTS

Maximize Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are an excellent opportunity for families to meet with teachers one-on-one and learn how their children are doing academically and socially. To make these meetings as smooth and stress-free as possible, follow these tips for conference preparation, execution, and follow-up.

Before the Conference

Listen. If you hear your child talking about something he or she is doing well in or is struggling with, make a note of it. When it's time for the conference, you'll have a list of topics to discuss.

Ask. Sit down with your child and ask him or her about school. Ask what's happening in class, at lunchtime, or in special classes such as art or physical education. Does your child enjoy classroom activities? Does your child feel like he or she is falling behind academically? Is he or she bored? Are there any troubling issues with classmates? Try asking your child what he or she thinks their teacher is going to tell you about them.

Assemble notes and papers. Write down questions you want to address with the teacher. Bring copies of any assignments you have questions about. Think ahead of time how to tactfully bring up concerns.

During the Conference

Be on time. Schools tightly schedule parent-teacher conferences because there's only so much time available and dozens of families to see. Show up at least a few minutes early.

Make childcare arrangements. Maximize your time with teachers by hiring a babysitter or teaming up with another parent to take turns watching the children.

Take notes. Make note of what the teacher tells you about your child. Bring up your concerns, making sure to explore strengths, weaknesses, and social skills.

Keep emotions out of it. It is always difficult to hear that your child may not be the person you thought he or she was in the classroom. Keep your cool and bear in mind that the teacher is offering constructive criticism.

After the Conference

Talk to your child. Tell your child what you and the teacher discussed. Emphasize the positive things the teacher said. Remember that it's important for your child to feel positive about learning, the teacher, and the school.

Follow up. If there were important issues that need to be dealt with, such as finding a tutor or arranging counseling for your child, make sure to follow up in writing with the teacher soon after the conference. Specify what steps will be taken, what your responsibilities and the school's responsibilities will be, and what the timetable is for action.

Meet with your principal. If, after conferring with your child's teacher, you still feel that serious issues weren't adequately addressed, set up a time to talk to the guidance counselor or principal.

Follow through. Once you know what you can do at home to help your child succeed in school, make sure to actually do it.



Web Resources

Scholastic Parent offers a round-up of resources on school involvement, including advocating for your student and how to bridge home and school.

<http://bit.ly/19J4bqO>

Ask these specific questions from **Reading Rockets** in your parent-teacher conference to gauge your child's reading skills.

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/19842/>