



Parent tips for teacher conferences



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INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

Student success in school is the result of so many factors: excellent curricula, class size, funding, school climate, and more. These things are important, but research shows that the most influential factor is the teacher. When combined with active parent involvement in schools, the odds of success for students go way up.

Parent involvement: Getting to know your child's teacher

Parents are important partners in student achievement. Parents should know their child's teacher. They should know how to contact them and feel comfortable reaching out to them. They should be a source of support — with their own child and, if they can, in the classroom.

Studies have repeatedly found that involved parents make a difference at school:

“Parents will have a significant impact on their child's learning and educational experience when they take an active role in monitoring the student's progress, assignments, attendance, activities, and events. Parent involvement helps keep students on track — from better attendance and fewer missed assignments to improved test scores and increased grade point averages.”

<http://bit.ly/2S82xct>

Connect with teachers at parent conferences

Teachers are busy, so casual conversations and interactions with parents are difficult. Fortunately, there are several scheduled opportunities to meet your child's teacher and keep tabs on your child's progress.

Parent-teacher conferences, generally scheduled in the fall and spring, are important. Teachers can introduce themselves and their instructional strategies to parents, and parents can learn about their child's specific academic strengths and weaknesses. It's a great time for both parties to put names to faces and build a partnership to help students succeed.

Here are some tips for effective conferences with teachers:

Before the conference

- Write down questions you want to discuss.
- Talk with your child about the fact that you have a meeting with his or her teacher. Ask the child if he or she has any concerns.
- Discuss what the child feels are his or her successes, likes and

dislikes about school. Ask if there are any problems you should discuss with the teacher.

- Be prepared to talk and listen during the conference. What goes on at home affects how well a child does in school. Be sure to let the teacher know about such key events as a separation or divorce, family illness, new baby, death in the family, loss of a beloved pet, etc. It is not necessary to share all your personal business, but it will help your child's teacher to know about important events that may affect your child's performance.

At the conference

- Arrive on time and stay only for the amount of time scheduled for your appointment. If important questions have not been discussed, ask for a future appointment. Overstaying your allotted time can put the teacher in an awkward position with other parents.
- Try to relax.
- Talk about your child's interests and any special information that he or she wanted discussed.
- Make notes during the conference to review with your child.
- Ask the teacher for his or her views on needed improvements.
- If your child needs additional help, ask if the school or district provides a list of tutors or after-school classes. Also ask the teacher to suggest specific ways you can help your child.
- Ask the teacher to explain anything you do not understand.
- Summarize your understanding of your child's progress and your child's teacher's comments to make sure you and the teacher are in agreement.
- Make sure that you know how to contact the teacher, perhaps by phone or email, and that the teacher knows the best way to get in touch with you.
- Ask the teacher about anything you have heard or read about the school or district that is of concern to you. The teacher should be able to explain any gossip or rumors about the school or refer you to someone who can.
- Follow up on any plan of action agreed to by you and your child's teacher. Stay in touch with the teacher. If you think of additional questions later, send a note or leave a message at the school for the teacher to call you.

After the conference

- Discuss what was said during the conference with your child. Be sure to emphasize any positive comments the teacher made.
- Talk with your child about strategies for improvement in academic areas and about other topics such as discipline issues, school activities that might interest your child, work habits, getting along with classmates — whatever topics were discussed during the conference.
- Use this as a chance to praise your child (for a project, an activity or just for helping you prepare for the conference) and to demonstrate interest in your child's life.