

Make the Most of Parent-Teacher Conferences

When you and your child's teacher work together, you are a powerful team. Here are some tips to help you make the most of parent-teacher conferences.

Before...

Before the conference, make a list of your questions and concerns, such as:

- ✚ What kinds of activities does my child do well in at school?
- ✚ Where does my child have difficulty?
- ✚ Does my child get along with other children?
- ✚ Does my child follow the directions and guidance of adult leaders?
- ✚ What can I do from home to assist and support my child?
- ✚ Is my child working up to his/her ability?
- ✚ Does my child participate in class discussions and activities?
- ✚ Has my child missed any classes other than the 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 kind of tests are being done? What do tests tell about my child's progress?
- ✚ How does my child handle taking tests?

Also, ask your child if he/she has any questions about school. Ask your child if there is anything he/she would like you to discuss with the teacher.

Other Tips for Establishing Good Communication with the Teacher and School

Get acquainted with the school principal and your child's teachers early in the school year.

Take part in school activities, such as PTO meetings, school plays and book fairs.

Volunteer to help with field trips, class parties, fundraisers and other school events.

Call teachers or school officials if you have questions about assignments, grades or school policies.

Be sure to notify the school when your child is absent and arrange to pick up homework during long absences.

Notify the school promptly of changes to your address or phone number.

Notify the school in advance, if you cannot attend parent-teacher conferences or other meetings. If necessary, make special appointments to meet with teachers.

Avoid criticizing school officials in front of your child; handle complaints directly with the appropriate school personnel.

The day of...

On the day of the parent-teacher conference, arrange childcare for your other children so you can give your undivided attention to the conference. Make sure you allow yourself plenty of time to get to the school, and be on time. Share information about your child, including personality traits, problems, habits and hobbies; the better the teacher knows your child, the better your child's experience in school will be. If your spouse cannot attend the conference, make sure you ask any questions or address any concerns he/she may have as well. Also, make sure to take notes to remind yourself of important points later.

After...

After the conference, immediately start on the action plan you and the teacher developed, if applicable. Discuss the plan with your child, and make sure he/she knows that you and the teacher care. Monitor your child's behavior, and check your child's classwork and homework to make sure the action plan is working. Stay in regular touch with the teacher to discuss your child's progress.