



PARENT EXPRESS

Parent-Teacher Conferences: Tips for Success

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Attending a parent-teacher conference is one of the best ways to get information about your child's education. It is also a way to form a partnership with your child's teachers. Both you and the teacher are working to help your child succeed. By working together it will help everyone achieve this goal.

Getting Ready

A great way to begin this partnership with the teacher begins long before a conference. Many schools hold an event for parents at the beginning of the school year. Attend the open house, welcome back or family night at the start of the year.

This isn't a time to discuss specifics about your child, but a more informal time to meet the teacher and other school staff, visit your child's classroom, see some of their work from the first weeks of school and meet other parents. The teacher may take some time to explain what the class will be doing in the following year. Examples of this are:

- What the children will be studying
- Technology they will use in the classroom
- Behavior policies or plans for the class and school
- Homework policies or schedule
- Assessments – grades and tests

Open house is a good time to ask about the best way to communicate with the teacher – phone, texts, email and notes in the backpack or assignment book. For calls or in-person

meetings, check what time would be best. Also, don't forget to ask the way the teacher plans to communicate with you.

Some schools will schedule parent-teacher conferences in the fall. However, if you feel the need to talk to your child's teacher, you may request a conference anytime throughout the year.

It can be intimidating to have a meeting at school. It can bring back memories of your days as a student, which may not always be pleasant. Try to remember that you and your child's teacher are there to support your child and that you want what is best for him/her.

Come prepared for the meeting. It is helpful to bring a notebook. Before the meeting, take some time to write down the questions you have. If there are specific things you want to tell the teacher, write those down too. If your spouse or another of your child's caretakers cannot attend at the meeting, ask for their concerns or questions. Also take time to talk to your child about anything they want to tell you about school or any questions they may have.

During the Conference

Every teacher will run the meeting differently, but here are a few things that may be discussed:

- *Current work* – The teacher will show you examples of work your child has done in class. This is an opportunity for you both to discuss your child's strengths and weaknesses.

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- *Report card* – Depending on the time of year, your child may have received grades and a report card. The teacher will review these grades with you.
- *Reading or math tests* – Many schools have students take a reading or math test at the beginning of the year to measure their current levels. The teacher will explain the test results. You may request a copy.
- *om the previous year* –The teacher may review results of this with you.

As a parent, it is important for you to ask questions. Some ideas or suggested questions to ask are:

- What are my child’s best and worst subjects?
- Is my child working up to his or her ability?
- Does my child participate in class discussion and activities?
- Are there any discipline problems?
- Are there programs or services in the community that could also help my child?
- What are some specific ways to help my child do better?

This last question may be the most important. After all, you and the teacher are working to help your child do his/her best in school. The teacher’s ideas will be your action plan for helping your child at home.

After the Conference

Once you are home, begin by praising your child for something positive the teacher said. Then start working on any plans you and the teacher discussed. Be sure to share the plan with your child. You want your son or daughter to know that you and the teacher are working together so he or she can succeed.

Finally, be sure to keep in touch with the teacher. You could start by sending them a thank you note or email for the conference. Continue to review progress reports, homework and returned classwork. These are all tools you can use to stay informed about your child’s progress. Maintaining a strong partnership with your child’s teachers will help your child get the best education possible.

Sources

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