

Parent-Teacher Conferences: A Tip Sheet for Parents

As a parent, you are your child's first and most important teacher. You and your child's school have something in common: you both want your child to learn and do well. When parents and teachers talk to each other, each person can share essential information about your child's talents and needs. Each person can also learn something new about how to help your child. Parent-teacher conferences are a fantastic way to start talking to your child's teachers. This tip sheet suggests ways that you can make the most of parent-teacher conferences so that everyone wins, especially your child.

What should you expect?

- **A two-way conversation.** Like all good conversations, parent-teacher conferences are best when both people talk and listen. The conference is a time for you to learn about your child's progress in school: Ask to see data about your child's attendance, grades, and test scores. Find out whether your child is meeting school expectations and academic standards.
- **Emphasis on learning.** Good parent-teacher conferences focus on how well the child is doing in school. They also talk about how the child can do even better.
- **Opportunities and challenges.** Just like you, teachers want your child to succeed. You will probably hear positive feedback about your child's progress and areas for improvement.

What should you talk to the teacher about?

- **Progress.** Find out how your child is doing by asking questions like: Is my child performing at grade level? How is he/she doing compared to the rest of the class?
- **Assignments and assessments.** Ask to see examples of your child's work. Ask how the teacher gives grades.
- **Your thoughts about your child.** Tell the teacher what you think your child is good at. Explain what he or she needs more help with.
- **Support learning at home.** Ask what you can do at home to help your child learn.

How should you follow up?

- **Make a plan.** Write down the things that you and the teacher will each do to support your child. You can do this during the conference or after. Write down what you will do, when, and how often. Make plans to check in with the teacher in the coming months.
- **Schedule another time to talk.** Communication should go both ways. Ask how you can contact the teacher. And don't forget to ask how the teacher will contact you too. Be sure to schedule at least one more time to talk in the next few months.
- **Talk to your child.** The parent-teacher conference is all about your child, so don't forget to include him or her. Share with your child what you learned. Show him or her how you will help with learning at home. Ask for his or her suggestions.

Checklist: Before the Conference

- ✓ Schedule a time to meet.
- ✓ Review your child's work, grades, and progress reports.
- ✓ Make a list of questions to ask during the conference.
- ✓ Think about ways you would like to be involved in your child's learning so that you can discuss them with the teacher.

Be Heard

Keep these principles in mind for a great parent-teacher conference.

Best intentions assumed
Emphasis on learning
Home-school collaboration
Examples and evidence
Active Listening
Respect for all
Dedication to follow-up

Resources:

Parent-Teacher Conference Tip Sheets
<http://tinyurl.com/293abzk>

Questions to Ask
<http://tinyurl.com/qxnz7hu>

**Title I Statewide Family and
Community Engagement Initiative**
at Region 16 Education Service Center

Funded by Texas Education Agency



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Graduate School of Education, www.hfrp.org
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