

Helpful Hints

Here are some guidelines to effective meetings:

Before



- If you wish to set up an appointment with the teacher, make a phone call or write a quick note to let the teacher know the purpose of the meeting.
- If, as with many busy parents today, you can't meet with teachers during school hours, then set up a time and location that is good for both you and the teacher. Sometimes teachers and parents agree to meet at a convenient place outside of school or hold the meeting over the phone.
- If you are going to a meeting that was scheduled by the teacher or school, ask beforehand how much time you will have. If you need more time or an additional appointment, let the teacher know up front.
- Establish a positive relationship with your child's teachers early in the school year and work to maintain it.

During

- Never miss a parent-teacher conference. Use the opportunity to exchange information with the teacher and develop ways to cooperate in educating your child.
- Exercise your right and responsibility to voice your questions and concerns. Express them in constructive ways.
- Ask for ways you can work with your child at home to reinforce what the teacher does in class.
- Recognize and acknowledge how difficult teachers' jobs can be.

After

- Thank school personnel when they are doing a good job.

After the Conference

Start on the action plan you and the teacher created. Talk about the plan with your child. Make sure your child knows that you and the teacher care. To see if the action plan is working, watch your child's behavior, check on all classwork and homework, and try to find out everything you can about how your child feels about the schoolwork. Stay in touch with the teacher to discuss your child's progress. Finally, remember to express your appreciation to the teacher as progress is made.

In summary, meeting with your child's teachers can and should build strong parent-teacher partnerships. These partnerships are important to help your child feel successful while getting the best education possible.



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Making Parent-Teacher Conferences Work for Your Child

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You've received a note from your child's teacher asking to see you.

Or, you're scheduled to discuss your child's progress in school. Or, you would like to talk to the teacher about something.

In each of these cases, you may be a little nervous...



Don't worry. A parent-teacher conference is a time when important people in a student's life can talk about how that student is doing in school. It is a chance for you to ask questions about the class or your child's progress. It is also a time for you and the teacher to work together as a team to discuss ways you both can help your son or daughter.

All students learn in different ways. They have individual personalities and their own listening and work habits. Teachers need to know as much as they can about each student's likes and dislikes. This helps them gear their teaching to students' learning preferences and interests. No one knows more than parents about these things. And no one has more influence over your son or daughter than you.

Whether your child is in elementary, middle, or secondary school, parent-teacher conferences are important. If your school does not schedule regular conferences, you can request them.

Teachers need your help to do a first-class job. Together, you can help your child have a great school year.

Getting Ready

Following are a couple of things you can do ahead of time that will help lay a foundation with the teacher for helping your child:

Talk to your child. Find out what he or she thinks are his or her best, favorite, and least favorite subjects. Ask why. Also, ask if there is anything you should talk about with the teachers. Make sure your child doesn't worry about such meetings and understands that you and the teacher are meeting to help him or her. If your child is in middle or high school, you may want to include him or her in the conference.

Make a list. Before

you go to the conference, it might help to write down the list of things you want to talk about with the teacher. For example,

- Questions about the school's programs or policies

- Questions about your child's progress
- How you, the teacher, and the school can work together to help your child
- Your child's home life, personality, concerns, habits and hobbies, and other things you feel the teacher should know about that might help in working with the child (e.g., religious holidays, music lessons, part-time jobs, a sick relative)

Gather input from others. If your spouse, another caregiving adult, or someone with useful information or insight (such as a doctor, counselor, or other guardian) can't attend the conference, seek out that person's concerns and questions before the conference.

The Conference

The questions you ask during the conference can help you express your hopes for the child's success in class and for the teacher. It's a good idea to ask the important questions first, in case time runs out. The teacher's answers should help you and the teacher work together to help your child. Following are some questions you may want to ask.

- Questions regarding your child**
- What subject does my child like most? Least?
 - What can I do to help my child with subjects he or she finds difficult? How can I help my child study? Prepare for class? Improve his or her work?
 - Is my child trying as hard as he or she can?
 - Does my child participate in class discussions and activities?

Note: If a student is having problems, it's easy for parents and teachers to get upset during a meeting. To avoid this situation, focus the conversation on what can be done for your son or daughter immediately and in the future.

If your child receives special services (e.g., gifted and talented programs, speech or occupational therapy), be sure to ask about the frequency of services and your child's progress.

- Is my child in different classes or groups for different subjects? Which ones? How are the groups determined?
- How well does my child get along with others?
- Has my child missed classes?
- Have you noticed changes in the way my child acts? For example, have you noticed squinting, tiredness, or moodiness that might be a sign of physical or other problems?

Questions regarding the teacher's methods

- How are you measuring my child's progress? Through tests? Portfolios? Class participation? Projects?
- What kinds of tests do you give? What do the tests show about my child's progress? How does my child handle taking tests?
- How can we work together to help my child?

You should expect your child's teacher to show you samples of your son's or daughter's work. The teacher should also suggest ways in which you can work together to help your child do better in school.

Develop an Action Plan

Before you leave, you and the teacher should agree on specific plans—that you both will work on—to help your child do better. This is the most important part of the meeting. It will become your and the teacher's action plan.

Be sure you understand what the teacher suggests. If it's not clear, ask for an explanation. Set up a way to check on your child's progress. You and the teacher can decide how best to stay in touch, such as through phone calls, notes, or additional meetings.

It's a good idea to end the conference by reviewing what you discussed and restating your action plan. This is also a good time to set up your next meeting.

Continued on back cover