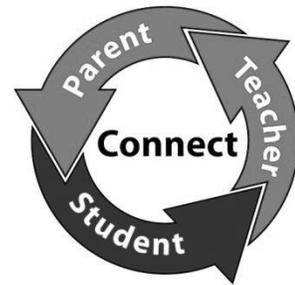


Make Parent-Teacher Conferences Work for You and Your Child



For Parents

Before the conference

- **Schedule an appointment.** Many schools schedule parent-teacher conferences a few times during the year; however, you can set up an additional meeting with your child's teacher for whatever reason. If you need to set up an appointment with the teacher, make a phone call or write a quick note to him, and let him know if you have particular issues you would like to discuss. If your work schedule does not allow you to meet with the teacher at regularly scheduled conference times, speak with him about scheduling a time that will work for both of you.
- **Talk to your child.** Find out which subjects she likes the best and the least. Ask why. Also, ask if there is anything she would like you to talk about with her teacher. Help her understand that you and her teacher are meeting to help her. If your child is in middle or high school, you may want to include her in the conference.
- **Gather input from others.** If your spouse, another care-giving adult, or someone with pertinent information or insight (doctor, counselor, other guardian) can't attend the conference, ask for that person's concerns and questions before the conference.
- **Make a list.** Before you go to the meeting, make a list of topics to discuss with the teacher. Along with questions about academics and behavior, you may want to talk to him about your child's home life, personality, concerns, habits and hobbies, and other topics that may help the teacher in working with your child (e.g., religious holidays, music lessons, part-time jobs, a sick relative).

During the conference

- **Establish a rapport.** As an icebreaker, take notice of something that reflects well upon the teacher. For example, thank her for having made thoughtful notes on your child's homework or for the special attention in helping your child learn to multiply.
- **Ask questions.** Questions you ask during the conference can help you express your hopes for your 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 both work together to help your child.



- **Address any problems.** Parent-teacher conferences are a good time to discuss any difficulties (either academic or behavioral) your child might be having at school. When problems arise, you will want to avoid angry or apologetic reactions, ask what is being done about the problem and what strategies seem to help at school, develop an action plan, and schedule a follow-up conference.
- **Develop an action plan.** If you need help with a behavioral or an academic issue, you and the teacher should agree on specific plans—that you both will work on—to help your child do well. Be sure you understand what the teacher suggests and if it's not clear, ask him to explain. 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.

After the conference

When discussing the conference with your child afterward, stress the good things that were covered and be direct about problems that were identified. If an action plan is in place, explain to your child what was arranged. A good way to promote a continuing relationship with the teacher is to say "thank you" with a note or a phone call. Continuing to keep in touch with her, even if things are going well, can play an important role in helping your child do better in school.