



# Fact sheet

## Preparing for Parent-Teacher Conferences



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**P**arent-teacher conferences are an excellent opportunity for parents to gain valuable information about their children. These face-to-face meetings take place one or more times a year to discuss a child's performance and progress in school. Positive, meaningful, interactions between parents and teachers help children succeed and reinforce the fact that education is important. Parents are encouraged to introduce themselves to their child's teacher at the start of the school year and communicate with their child's teacher often and openly. This helps to ensure that the issues discussed in parent-teacher conferences are not a surprise to anyone.

The following guidelines will help parents make the most of parent teacher conferences:

### **Before the Conference:**

- ✓ Talk with your child. Allow your child to give you some information about the teacher in his/her own words. Ask, "what do you like or dislike about school?" or, "what would you like me to talk about with your teacher?" Help your child understand that you and their teacher(s) are meeting together in order to help them. Let your child know that you will talk with him or her after the conference about what was discussed.
- ✓ Write down information about your child that you want to convey to the teacher, like, special talents, hobbies, health needs, or favorite subjects. Also include information about life changes, such as a move, new baby, divorce, or death in the family.
- ✓ Write down questions to ask the teacher about your child's specific situation. Some examples include: What will be

covered in this school year? What are the expectations for homework? How are my child's work habits and behavior? What are my child's strengths? What areas need improvement? How are grades determined? What can I do at home to help my child be more successful?

- ✓ Arrange for both parents to attend. An increasing number of studies show that involvement by both parents in education has a significant impact on a child's scholastic achievement. If your spouse can't attend the conference with you, ask for his or her concerns and questions. At times, it is also appropriate for the child to attend.

### **During the Conference:**

- ✓ Be on time. If you cannot make your appointment, call to reschedule. Teachers have many parents to meet with and must keep to a schedule to accommodate everyone. Be sure to introduce yourself, as teachers see several parents at a time and may need a quick reminder. You may even wish to review with the teacher what you feel makes your child special.
- ✓ Listen to the teacher's explanations regarding your child. Be sure to ask your most important questions first, just in case time runs out before you and the teacher have a chance to discuss them all. Ask the teacher to explain things you do not understand. Ask to see samples of your child's work. Ask questions you prepared prior to the conference.
- ✓ Share the information you prepared about your child, such as his or her needs, special talents, hobbies. Inform the teacher of any new developments at home. Agree to update the teacher when necessary.



- ✓ Provide the teacher with phone numbers where both parents can be reached. Ask to be kept informed of new developments with your child and agree to do the same.
- ✓ If the teacher reports that the child has no problems or the parents “have nothing to worry about,” be prepared to ask questions like: “How can I help my child continue to make good progress in school?” And, “What goals would you like to see my child achieve?”
- ✓ Remember to thank the teacher for his or her time and dedication to your child.

### After the Conference:

- ✓ Share with your child the information you obtained. Stress the positive throughout your discussion. Talk with your child about suggestions for improvement and help your child to make a plan to carry out those suggestions.
- ✓ Keep your end of the bargain with your child’s teacher. Stay in touch, keep the teacher informed, continue to check your child’s homework, and read notices sent home from school. Children are more likely to succeed in school if they can view their parents and their teachers working together cooperatively.
- ✓ Take part in school activities whenever possible. Show children that you support their interests, both academic and extra-curricular. When parents are involved, children receive the following messages: “I care about you” and “education is important.”
- ✓ A parent is one of many teachers a child will have. By building a strong partnership with a child’s school teachers, parents can gain tangible skills and support for their own “teaching opportunities.” Make the world your child’s classroom.

### Suggestions for Improving School Performance

1. Serve a nutritious breakfast. Research shows that children who regularly eat breakfast score higher on tests and achieve better grades in school.

2. Practice active listening with your child. School problems sometimes begin as spin-offs from other areas of life. Learn to “listen between the lines” and stay in tune with what is going on in your child’s life.
3. Get additional help for your child when needed. Contact the teacher or school administration to find out about tutoring or mentoring programs that can provide homework assistance and other support for you and your child.
4. Lead by example. If a parent is continually learning, a child will know that education is important and valuable.
5. Be generous with praise. Children do respond to positive reinforcement. Keep the following quote in mind:

**“Celebrate what you want to see more of.”**  
– Tom Peters, American Business writer

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