

# Parent Teacher Conference Guide

## Overall Tips

Parent-teacher conferences are a constant throughout your child's education. Not every conference in every school will be structured exactly the same; this guide is intended as a general reference point. There are a few key points that apply no matter your child's age or grade level:

- **The first and most important step is your involvement.**  
Attending the conference is essential to building a relationship with your child's teacher, and opening lines of communication will show the school and your child that you care and are involved in his education. The act of attending meetings with your child's teacher sends a message to your child that education is important. Building a partnership with your child's teacher is a great way for both of you to support your child and each other. Conferences are also a good place to hear about any behavioral issues or learning difficulties that the teacher may notice, and it's best to know of those concerns as soon as possible. If one parent or guardian can't attend, ask the teacher ahead of time about arranging for a Skype or speaker-phone call, so everyone can be involved.
- **Be on time.**  
Depending on your child's age and number of teachers, you may have anywhere from 5-20 minutes for the conference. Your time with the teacher is therefore limited and you should try to make the most of it. Try to keep in mind you are not the only parent the teacher is meeting with, and try to stay within your allotted time.
- **Be prepared for the meeting.**  
Part of being prepared is knowing your child's grades in advance of your meeting. Many teachers will have a website where you can check grades, assignments and tests. You may also want to look at the expectations for students at your child's grade level, so you can discuss these with the teacher. You could consult our academic benchmarks or your local school's website for a background on what your child should be learning. Ask your child beforehand how he thinks he's doing in class and if he has any concerns.
- **Bring questions.**  
It helps to write your thoughts down so you make sure you get to everything you'd like to cover. Because time is so limited, before you go into the meeting, prioritize what is on top of your list to address with the teacher. For example, you may want to know how your child is performing compared to her peers, or if there's a particular subject where improvement is needed. Also, you should take notes during the meeting.
- **Let the teacher know you value her time and treat her with respect.**  
Most conferences are held over the course of a day or two—meaning your child's teacher will be in back-to-back meetings during this time. Each family has different concerns and questions for the teacher and it's a long day. Try not to get offended or angry if she delivers bad news. Listen first, then talk. Thank the teacher for bringing up a problem and discuss ways in which you can solve it together. A good parent-teacher relationship can help everyone better support your child's learning.
- **Bring up anything that is happening at home that could affect your child's behavior, learning, or participation in class.**  
A divorce, illness or death in the family or of a family pet, financial issues, or other disruptions to your routine could all have an impact on your child.
- **Arrange a way to communicate going forward.**  
Ask whether the teacher's preferred method of communication is phone calls, emails or continued meetings. You should let it be known that you plan to be an active participant in your child's academic achievement and you are available for further discussions. Your partnership with your child's teacher is most beneficial if it continues through the year, so you should maintain a relationship beyond the initial conference. This will help identify potential issues in your child's learning or behavior and will make both you and the teacher feel comfortable bringing up ways to support your child's education all year.

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