

Parent Teacher Conference Guide

Elementary School

Elementary school is when parents are most likely to attend conferences, and these meetings will lay the foundation for your attitude and form your impression of conferences in the future. According to educational consultant and child expert Dr. Michele Borba, if you have a positive experience you're more likely to continue attending conferences year after year, which is a crucial step in continuing your involvement in your child's educational achievement.

- **Elementary school conferences are likely to be the longest conferences you'll have.**

Depending on your school, they generally run 15-20 minutes. Because your child has one teacher and one classroom, you won't have to split conference time with other teachers. In this conference setting, you'll likely be in the room in which your child spends the majority of the day. This is a good time for you to experience what your child's daily environment is like in addition to spending some one-on-one time with her teacher.

- **The conference is likely to be more general than in middle or high school.**

You can expect to talk about math and reading abilities and benchmarks. If your child has recently taken a standardized test, that may be the only real specific item to discuss. You should be prepared to ask the teacher about gains your student is making and what areas are more difficult. The teacher should also be able to give insight into how your child is learning – whether she seems to be a more visual or audible learner. Which way does she seem to understand and remember better? This can also help you work with your child at home in a more constructive way.

- **You should expect a holistic view of your child.**

Because your child has one teacher, the teacher will have a good sense of your child as a whole. Your child's success in school depends on social, motivational and behavioral factors, so this is a good time to talk about more than just academic achievements. How is she fitting in? How is her stress level? Is she participating in class? Is she taking on leadership roles? You'll be able to get insight from the teacher and discuss ways in which you can help reinforce strengths and work on weaknesses at home.

- **Ask where your child sits in the classroom.**

Elementary school is a good place to notice any eye sight problems, says Dr. Borba. Does she squint a lot? Does she seem to be having a hard time seeing the board? Is she constantly scooting closer to see? Identifying any issues early on can help keep your child from falling behind or becoming disengaged in the classroom.

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