

A Parent Guide to Parent-Teacher Conferences

What is a Parent-Teacher Conference?

An ideal Parent-Teacher Conference is a conversation between you and your child's teacher about your child's progress at school. This may include your child's transition to school, how your child gets along with friends and teachers, how your child is learning and what your child is learning. The conversation should also include information about things your child does well and how you can help your child grow further. It should include ways you can support your child in the areas where he/she needs some help and where you can find more information to help you support your child. For example, you may receive ideas for concrete activities you can do at home or you may receive helpful websites, books you may find at the library or parent workshops from your child's teacher.

Why do I need to go to the Parent-Teacher Conference when I see my child's teacher every day?

Parent-Teacher Conference time is designed for you to receive details about your child, see his/her work and ask pertinent questions you may have. Parent-Teacher Conferences are important for your child, your child's teacher and for you. Day to day conversations with the teacher give you small snapshots of what may have happened on a particular day. A conference gives you a fuller picture of how your child is doing. You should expect a notice about when and where parent teacher conferences will be happening a few weeks in advance. If the time scheduled interferes with work, speak to your child's teacher to set up another time. Teachers want to talk with you about your child's progress and will make every effort to work with you. By making time to go to Parent-Teacher Conferences, you are showing your child that education is a priority.

What is going to happen at the Parent-Teacher conference?

A two-way conversation You can expect time with the teacher to hear about your child's progress, see samples of your child's work and ask questions.

Emphasis on learning The teacher will have specific information to share with you about your child. You will likely get to see samples of your child's work and progress over time. The teacher may share strategies he/she is using to help your child develop the knowledge and skills needed to be ready for Kindergarten.

Discussion of Opportunities and Challenges The teacher wants your child to be successful in school as much as you do. The teacher will share information about your child's strengths and how to make them even stronger. They will share information about where weaknesses, areas in which your child needs to grow and give you examples of how you can help them at home. He/she will let you know of any challenges preventing your child from progressing. Since the things you do with your child *outside* of school are just as important as what is happening *in* school, the teacher

may share specific ideas, strategies and activities that you can do with your child at home that will support his learning.

What are some questions I should ask to find out about my child’s work and progress?

Progress

How is my child doing compared to the rest of the class? What do you see as his or her strengths? How could he or she improve? In what areas could he/she improve?

Work samples and assessments

Can I see examples of my child’s work? What rubrics do you use to assess my child’s progress? What assessment system do you use?

Support learning at home

What can I do at home to help my child continue to build knowledge and skills? Are there programs or services in the community that could also help my child?

Support learning at school

How will you challenge my child? How will you support my child when he or she needs help.? What other resources are available at the school to support my child?

Your thoughts about your child

Share your own thoughts and feelings about your child. Share with the teacher your child’s strengths and weaknesses according to your own observations. Tell the teacher any important information that might help him or her understand your child including strengths, challenges, and interests. Explain what you think he or she needs more help.

Next Steps After the Conference

- Make a plan** about how you will support your child’s progress
- Schedule a time to follow up** with the teacher about your child’s progress
- Talk with your child** about the conference; share how you will be helping him with learning at home.

Content adapted from *Parent–Teacher Conference Tip Sheets for Principals, Teachers, and Parents*, June 2009, Harvard Family Research Project.

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