

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 may also include information about things your child does well and how you can help your child grow further. It may 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 being offered in your community.

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's experience in school, see examples his/her work, and ask any 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. Teachers typically send a notice about when and where parent teacher conferences will be happening a few weeks in advance. If you're not available during the designated time, you should work with 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?

- 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 areas for growth, and how you can extend your child's learning 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 What do you see as my child's strengths? What do you see as my child's areas for growth? Is my child on track to meet the pre-k standards by the end of the year?
- 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 extend my child's learning? 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 what you see as your child's strengths and areas for growth. Tell the teacher any important information that might help him or her understand your child including strengths, challenges, and interests. Explain where you think your child needs more support.

Next Steps After the Conference

- Make a plan** for 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 or her with learning at home.

Pre-K is the first step toward preparing your child for college and future careers.

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

Brought to you by The Office of Early Childhood Education

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