

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

PARENT-GUARDIAN ADVICE
MARCH 2021

During the Conference

- ▶ Be on time (or early) for the meeting.
- ▶ End the meeting on time. Other parents will probably have a conference after yours.
- ▶ Relax and be yourself.
- ▶ Stay calm during the conference.
- ▶ Ask the most important questions first.
- ▶ If your child receives additional support (such as ELL), ask about your child's progress.
- ▶ Ask for explanations of anything you don't understand.
- ▶ Ask your child's teacher for ways that you can help your child at home.
- ▶ Thank the teacher.

After the Conference

- ▶ Talk about the conference with your child.
- ▶ Talk about the positive points and be direct about concerns.
- ▶ Tell your child about any plans you and the teacher created.
- ▶ Set realistic goals with your child (only 1 or 2).
- ▶ Keep in touch with the teacher during the school year.

Before the Conference

- ▶ Clarify with the teacher whether it would be best to attend with or without your child.
- ▶ Ask your child how she feels about school.
- ▶ Ask your child if there is anything that they want you to talk about with their teacher.
- ▶ Tell your child that you and the teacher are meeting to help them.
- ▶ Make a list of topics that you want to talk about with the teacher.
- ▶ Prepare a list of questions such as:
 1. What are my child's strengths?
 2. What is an area of concern?
 3. Is my child engaged in class?
 4. Does my child seem happy at school?
 5. What can I do at home to support my child?





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Ask and Answer Questions About Your Child's Life

May I tell you about my child?

No one knows your child better than you do, so it's your job to help your child's teacher learn more. Provide your child's teacher with more information on what motivates your child, likes and dislikes, special skills, strengths and challenges.

May I tell you about what's going on at home?

Situations like illness, divorce or a new baby may affect your child's school experience, so inform your child's teacher of such circumstances. Even knowing if the child goes to one home on certain days and another home on other days can be helpful. If home life circumstances change dramatically in between conferences, be sure to drop your child's teacher a note to let them know.

How is my child doing socially?

The way the child functions socially in the class is a topic that should be addressed at a conference, so inquire about your child's peer relations. A child's social development is just as important as their academic development, and your child's teacher will have made useful observations they can share with you.

It's important to know if your child interacts well with the other children. Are they a good friend? Do they help out if another student is struggling? These are all important skills that go into measuring a child's overall development.

How is my child doing emotionally?

It's important to ask about your child's emotional health at school. For example, is your child generally happy? Are there certain times of the day when your child seems stressed out or agitated?

What are my child's academic strengths and weaknesses?

Your child's teacher sees your child from a different perspective than you do. Ask the teacher what personal challenges your child needs to work on and listen to the response with an open mind. Ask about their strengths, as well, so you can encourage them to continue doing good work. Parents often have higher academic expectations for children than the teacher does, particularly early on in the year, so getting the teacher's perspective can be eye-opening.

Is my child performing on grade level?

At a conference, parents should expect to see examples of their child's work. Parents should ask "how this compares to grade-level expectations," but don't try to compare your child to other students. Each child is different and has different strengths and learning abilities.

Teachers will absolutely let parents know if they are concerned that a child is falling below grade level, so this isn't something to get too hung up on unnecessarily. The most important thing here is to know if your child's performance is where it should be, and your child's teacher will be able to tell you that definitively.

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Does my child need extra help in any areas?

Your child's teacher can tell you if your child is falling behind in a skill or a subject, like Math or English. Work with your child's teacher to create a plan to help your child progress well in school. There may be specific things you can do at home to help, such as hiring a tutor or helping with homework.

Questions to Ask if Your Child is Experiencing Challenges in School

May I share a concern?

If you're worried about a situation at school, bring it up with the teacher. Teachers usually appreciate when parents bring an issue to their attention, as long as it's done with respect. For example, if you're concerned about the amount of time your child is spending on his homework, this is the time to open the discussion with his teacher. Teachers and parents all have the same goal: to do what they can to ensure that the children have a successful school year.

Can you fill me in on a particular situation?

When your child has complaints about what's going on at school, parents should ask for clarification from the teacher, as often your child's side is the only side you've heard. This can include anything from a peer-to-peer issue or a teacher that your child is having trouble with. If you don't feel like you're getting anywhere after the conference, contact the principal to deal with specific situations.

Important Questions to End With

How can I help at home to support what you're doing in the classroom?

There might be supplies you can purchase, prep work you can do at home, or skill practice you can work into your child's routine at home.

What's the best way to communicate with you?

Teachers have a lot of students and parents trying to talk to them during any given school day, so it's important to get an understanding of how they prefer to communicate. Some teachers prefer email, phone or face-to-face, while others may use an online tool. Find out which method your child's teacher prefers so that you can communicate questions or concerns to them in the best way.