



HAVING A SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE WITH TEACHERS: TIPS FOR PARENTS

Schools hold parent-teacher conferences so that educators and parents can discuss children's progress in the classroom. Unfortunately, these meetings are very short--sometimes a mere 10 to 20 minutes long! To glean as much information as possible during these brief meetings, parents can try the following:

Go to the meeting prepared. Here are a few ways to prepare for a parent-teacher conference:

- ✓ Talk with your children beforehand. Ask them if there is anything specific you should discuss with their teacher.
- ✓ Find your children's most recent "report" card. Take it to the meeting so that you may refer to it if necessary.
- ✓ Think of and write down specific questions or concerns you would like to ask or discuss with the teacher(s).
- ✓ Parents know their children better than anyone. Think about information about your children that may help their teachers understand them better, e.g. personality traits, interests, or family circumstances that may affect their learning.



At the meeting:

- ✓ Talk about your concerns in a tactful way; do not blame, but approach problems (if applicable) as issues that the teachers, parents, and the children can work together to overcome.
- ✓ If the teachers talk about something you do not understand, ask for clarification.
- ✓ Think about what you want to find out during the conference. Ask questions, but also listen carefully to what the teachers say. It may be helpful to take notes.



The United Federation of Teachers recommends that parents ask the following questions at parent-teacher conferences. Since the meetings are very brief, parents should prioritize the areas they would like to cover.

- ☐ What curriculum topics will be covered during the year?
- ☐ What is expected of the students in the class?
- ☐ What are my children's strengths and weaknesses?
- ☐ How can parents and teachers work together to help the children capitalize on their strengths and overcome their weaknesses?
- ☐ What can I do at home with my children to support their learning?
- ☐ Do my children participate in class?
- ☐ Are my children doing and turning in all of their homework?
- ☐ How much time should they spend on homework each night?
- ☐ Will you keep me informed if my children start to fall behind in their work?
- ☐ What resources are available at the school to help students who are having trouble?

In addition, parents should think about questions (that are not on this list) they would like to ask. Parents should also find out how to reach and maintain communication with their children's teacher(s) after the conference (especially if all of their questions or concerns weren't addressed due to time constraints) and throughout the school year. Parent-teacher conferences should not be the only opportunity for communication between the home and school! ☆

👁️ Please note that when we refer to "parent" we mean anyone who is primarily responsible for a child. This includes grandparents or other relatives, guardians, foster parents, etc.

Sources: "Tips for Successful Parent-Teacher Conferences," the United Federation for Teachers at www.uft.org; "How to Get the Most from Parent-Teacher Conferences," The Parent Institute at www.parent-institute.com/educator/resources/tips/tips.php.