

Notes about the conference

Follow-up plans

Teacher contact information



Tips for a successful parent-teacher conference

REMINDER:

Your conference time for _____

is at _____ on _____

Parent-teacher conferences are a time for parents/guardians and teachers to share information, solve problems and form relationships that will help your child succeed. Since you know more about your child than anyone at school, your child’s teachers need to hear from you. And since your child’s teachers know what is going on in the learning environment, you need to hear from the teachers.

Like all good conversations, parent–teacher conferences are best when both people talk and listen. The conference is a time for you to learn about your child’s progress in school. This is also a time for the teacher to learn about what your child is like at home. When you tell the teacher about your child’s skills, interests, needs, and dreams, the teacher can help your child more. You will probably hear positive feedback about your child’s progress *and* areas for improvement. Ask what you can do at home to help your child learn. This conversation will help pave the way for your child to do well in class.

Conferences need to be kept to 20 to 25 minutes. If you run out of time, you can always request a follow-up meeting.

This guide was produced to encourage family participation in child achievement and is based on information from the State of Washington Office of the Education Ombudsman and the Harvard Family Research Project.

Parent-Teacher Conference Checklist

Before the conference

- Talk with your student to understand his or her questions and concerns about school.
- Check progress reports, report cards and work your child has brought home.
- Think of questions you want to ask the teacher. (See the checklist for possible questions, and add your own.)
- Write down information about your child that the teacher should know, such as a family death, divorce, changed finances, illness or a new home. (You can use the checklist below.)
- All adults with a role in a child's education — mother, father, grandparent, guardian — are encouraged to attend the conference.
- If English is not your first language, contact the school before the parent-teacher conference and request an interpreter to assist you during the meeting. Find out what the options are for help with interpreting other school communications.
- If you can't make the scheduled appointment, arrange another time with your child's teacher.

At the conference

- Ask the teacher what your child should know by the end of the school year.
- Ask how you can support your child's learning at home.
- If you don't understand something, ask the teacher to explain.
- Find out the best way (notes, phone calls, e-mail) and the best time to communicate with the teacher. Exchange contact information with the teacher.
- Be aware that the teacher needs to talk to other families. Ask to schedule a follow-up meeting, if necessary.

After the conference

- Jot down a couple of notes about the conference. (The checklist includes space for notes.)
- Discuss with your child what the teacher told you, especially the positive comments.
- Talk about goals and make a plan to reach them together.
- If you are the parent of a young child, check your child's backpack daily for materials sent home from school. Read all of it.
- Contact the teacher whenever you have questions. If your child is not doing well, set up a regular schedule with the teacher to monitor progress.
- Send the teacher a thank-you note when something good happens in the classroom.
- Talk with your child every day about school. Attend school events and offer to help from home, volunteer in the classroom or join the parent organization.

Questions for the teacher

- Mark the questions that are most important to you, and add your own.
- How is my child doing? Is my child working up to his/her potential?
- Is this class appropriate for my child's ability level?
- Does my child pay attention in class?
- Does my child ask questions, volunteer answers, and participate in discussion?
- Is my child's homework completed thoroughly, accurately and on time?
- Can you show me some of my child's work?
- Is my child in class every day? Does he/she come to class on time?
- Is my child respectful and courteous?
- What are your expectations of my child?
- Do you have any advice or suggestions for me or for my child?
- Does my child finish assignments in class and turn in homework?
- Does my child join in class discussions?
- What does my child do well?
- Is my child having a difficult time in any areas?
- What resources are available at school to support my child's learning?
- What tests or big projects will happen this year?
- What is the best way to stay in touch about my child's progress through the year?
- What suggestions do you have for me to get involved with school, and to help my child succeed?
- What specific things can I do at home to help my child learn?
- How is my child's culture reflected in the classroom learning time?
- Other questions: _____

Things to tell the teacher

- How my child learns best.
- Any big changes in the family — a new home, new people in the home, death or divorce.
- Medical conditions that affect my child.
- What has helped my child learn successfully in the past.
- What my child enjoys about school and the classroom.
- What is most challenging for my child in this class.
- Other _____