
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Preparing for a parent- teacher conference



- ❖ **INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES** is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Written by Judy McDaniel, communications consultant.

Research shows convincingly that parent involvement has a critical effect on children's learning, attitudes about school and aspirations. When parents and teachers work together they can make an unbeatable team. Parent-teacher conferences help build that team.

Before the conference

- ❖ Write down questions you want to discuss.
- ❖ Talk with your child about the fact that you have a meeting with his or her teacher. Ask the child if he or she has any concerns. Discuss what the child feels are his or her successes, likes and dislikes about school. Ask if there are any problems you should discuss with the teacher.
- ❖ Be prepared to talk and listen during the conference. What goes on at home affects how well a child does in school. Be sure to let the teacher know about such key events as a separation or divorce, family illness, new baby, death in the family, loss of a beloved pet, etc. It is not necessary to share all your personal business, but it will help your child's teacher to know about important events that may affect your child's performance.

At the conference

- ❖ Arrive on time and stay only for the amount of time scheduled for your appointment. If important questions have not been discussed, ask for a future appointment. Overstaying your allotted time can put the teacher in an awkward position with other parents.
- ❖ Try to relax.
- ❖ Talk about your child's interests and any special information that he or she wanted discussed.
- ❖ Make notes during the conference to review with your child.
- ❖ Ask the teacher for his or her views on needed improvements.
- ❖ If your child needs additional help, ask if the school or district provides a list of tutors or after-school classes. Also ask the teacher to suggest specific ways you can help your child.
- ❖ Ask the teacher to explain anything you do not understand.
- ❖ Summarize your understanding of your child's progress and your child's teacher's comments to make sure you and the teacher are in agreement.

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- ❖ Make sure that you know how to contact the teacher, perhaps by phone or e-mail, and that the teacher knows the best way to get in touch with you.
- ❖ Ask the teacher about anything you have heard or read about the school or district that is of concern to you. The teacher should be able to explain any gossip or rumors about the school or refer you to someone who can.
- ❖ Follow up on any plan of action agreed to by you and your child's teacher. Stay in touch with the teacher. If you think of additional questions later, send a note or leave a message at the school for the teacher to call you.

After the conference

- ❖ Discuss with your child what was said during the conference. Be sure to emphasize any positive comments the teacher made.
- ❖ Talk with your child about strategies for improvement in academic areas and about other topics such as discipline issues, school activities that might interest your child, work habits, getting along with classmates – whatever topics were discussed during the conference.
- ❖ Use this as a chance to praise your child (for a project, an activity or just for helping you prepare for the conference) and to demonstrate interest in your child's life.