

# Effective parent-teacher conferences

Communication and cooperation between the home and the school are key ingredients to your child's success. Whether exchanging information or identifying and solving common concerns, parent-teacher conferences can be valuable learning experiences.

## Parent-teacher conferences:

- build a cooperative working relationship with your child's teacher,
- enable you and your child's teacher to exchange pertinent information about your child,
- when necessary, establish a plan of action for resolving concerns.

## Before the conference:

1. Prepare your agenda. Talk with your child and decide on questions or concerns you wish to discuss with the teacher.
2. Consider relevant information you wish to convey to the teacher about your child. This information will help the teacher understand your child better.
3. Decide on an order of priority in case time becomes an issue.
4. If applicable, arrange for a baby-sitter so that both parents are able to attend the conference.

## During the conference:

1. Take some notes. Write down the teacher's answers to your pertinent questions.
2. Record the plan of action which has been agreed upon.
3. Discuss roles and responsibilities for the teacher, your child, and yourself.

## After the conference:

1. Discuss the key points of the conference with your child.
2. Start immediately on the plan of action which was agreed upon at the conference. The sooner the action plan is implemented, the sooner you should see positive results.
3. If you find that you are unable to continue with any part of your plan for whatever reason, contact the teacher to discuss possible alternatives.

## Helpful Hints

- *Confirm your appointment.*
- *Be positive! Remember you are both working towards the same goal.*
- *Highlight the child's strengths. We all have weaknesses, but we build from our strengths.*
- *Recognize what is working.*
- *Be clear about your objective(s) for the conference at the beginning. For example "I appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my daughter's progress in Math."*
- *Provide specific examples when explaining a point. This prevents misunderstanding and substantiates your ideas.*
- *Listen carefully. Be prepared to acknowledge each other's points of view.*
- *Be objective. It is important to stay focused on the student.*
- *Stick to the agenda. Bringing up other problems can cloud the issue. It is far better to focus on one concern than to superficially touch on many.*