

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.
- 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.
- 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.