

ACTION INFORMATION SHEET

Preparing for Parent-Teacher Conferences

Children do best in school when parents and teachers work together. Research shows that students learn more, have higher grades, and have better school attendance when parents are involved in their child's education. That's why attending parent-teacher conferences is so important: it's a great way for parents to become involved and stay involved throughout the school year.

Parent-Teacher conferences are a good way to meet your child's teacher and learn about your child's academic performance, as well as the teacher's expectations. If you know what is expected in the classroom, you can more easily address any issue that comes up as your child moves through the school year. By attending conferences, you also send a positive message to your child that school is important.

Keep in mind that you are an equal partner at the conference. If you have questions or observations, the conference is a good time to share them with the teacher. Don't forget to share what you know about your child. Your information helps the teacher better understand and teach your child.

The following tips can help you prepare for a parent-teacher conference:

Schedule the Conference

- Set the conference at a time that is convenient for you.
- If meeting at school makes you feel uncomfortable, ask to meet somewhere else.
- Ask for a phone conference if you cannot attend your child's conference in person.
- Inform the school as soon as possible if you need an interpreter.

Think About Your Child

- Review any work your child brings home.
- Does the work show effort?

- Write down your child's strengths and weaknesses.
- Think about how your child works best; where? when?
- Does your child have any questions or concerns?

List Questions or Concerns for the Teacher

- Does my child hand in homework on time and is it complete?
- Is my child doing work at or above grade level?
- How are grades determined?
- Does my child work better in groups or alone?
- How does my child get along with others? Adults? Children?
- Is there any concern about learning or behavior problems that I should know about? If so, what has been tried to help my child?
- What can I do at home and school to help my child build on strengths and improve weaknesses?
- How can I keep in touch about my child's progress?
- What are some opportunities for me to become involved at school?

Remember that children do best in school when parents and teachers work together!

Homework Tips

Children achieve more when parents partner with schools. Be a partner and help your child do better in school by monitoring homework. Parents can help with homework in several ways:

- Remember that each child is unique and learns differently.
- Make homework a priority in your child's schedule.
- Set aside a time and place in your home each day for homework.
- Have your child read or do an activity that supports an academic skill.
- Find resources within the school and your community that can provide academic support.

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- Ask your child daily about homework.
 - Allow your child to complete homework alone, but be ready to offer ways to solve challenges.
 - Monitor attendance, homework, quizzes, and tests.

What's a Parent/Teacher Compact?

If your child is in an elementary school Title I program, you're able to attend an additional special conference designed for your child. With your child's teachers, you'll help create the Parent/Teacher Compact, a written agreement designed by the school district and parents of children receiving Title I services. The compact outlines how the school and parents will work together to help children improve academically.

For instance, the compact may state that the school's responsibility is to provide a high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment. It may also list ways parents can participate in decisions relating

to the education of their child by serving on the school site council, PTA, or Title I parent involvement committee.

The compact also addresses the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis by providing at minimum:

- an annual parent/teacher conference to review the compact
- reasonable access to staff
- opportunities for parents to volunteer, participate in classroom activities, and observe classrooms

No Child Left Behind Act states that elementary schools, at least annually, are required to have a scheduled parent/teacher conference to discuss the Parent/Teacher Compact as it relates to your child's achievement. You may consider asking the school if a format of the compact is available for you to review prior to the conference.