

School Conferences: A way to engage in your child's education

School conferences are a great way for families to stay engaged in their child's education. Attending conferences and talking with your child's teacher helps to keep you aware of what is happening in the school and classroom. It is also a great time to discuss your child's strengths, learning style, challenges, and build a relationship with your child's teacher or teachers.

If there is a major concern, however, school conferences aren't the best place to resolve it. Often the meeting time is limited, and you may need more time to discuss an issue. Use some of the conference time to set up another meeting with the teacher to work together toward solving the problem.

Here are some ideas that can be discussed at your child's school conference:

- Your child's achievements and successes. Ask about any assessments that have been completed and discuss the results. Assessments can be tests, evaluations, or ways of looking at your child's behaviors.
- Your child's school or classwork. This can include seeing samples of your child's work.
- Minor issues or concerns about behavior.
- How my child interacts with other students and school staff.

How to prepare before school conferences

- Look at your child's report card and any state assessments. Where is your child doing well, and where are they challenged?
- Look at recent classwork or what the teacher might call assignments. Review any comments or grades given on the work. Check and see if the work is completed, organized, and accurate. If you have questions about previous assignments that your child brought home, bring those with you to the conference.
- Talk to your child about how they feel in class. Ask about their likes and dislikes. Is there something your child would like for you to discuss with their teacher during conferences?
- Write down your concerns or talking points, and bring them to the conference.

Assessments – tests, evaluations, ways of looking at your child's behaviors, progress, school work

Assignments – class work, homework

What to ask during the beginning-of-year school conference

- What are my child's overall strengths?
- What are my child's academic strengths and difficulties? Are they having trouble in specific areas such as reading, writing, math, or science? This information will help you and your child's teacher make a plan that fits your child's needs. Focus on their strengths to help them in areas where they might be struggling.
- Does my child participate in class? What is the teacher's expectation for classroom participation? Is my child aware of the expectations and how to meet them? If your child is not speaking up in class,

it is important to know why. Sometimes, students don't speak up because they are having a hard time understanding a question or assignment.

- How can we help at home? By asking this question, you can learn what to do at home to support your child in class. The student needs help from both their teacher and family to grow and succeed.

What to ask during the end-of-year school conference

- Is my child meeting end-of-year expectations for their grade level?
- What skills should my child be working on during the summer to prepare them for next year? How can I support the skills at home?
- If your child is struggling academically, ask about summer programs that are offered through the school, district, library, or other community organizations that could support your child.

Follow-up activities after school conferences

If your child is unable to attend the conference, here are some things that you can do:

- Talk about the conference with your child when you are home. Your child may be feeling anxious about your meeting with their teacher. Having a conversation with your child will help them to feel more at ease, and understand that you and the teacher are both there to support their growth.
- Talk about areas where your child does well and areas where your child could use more help.
- Make a plan with your child about what learning will look like at home.
- If you and the teacher discussed next steps, follow-up within the month to see if you and the teacher are on track.

**Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools are using distance learning and have restricted in-person meetings. Back-to-School nights and parent teacher conferences may be held using a video conference platform. If your school is not holding in-person meetings, contact your child's teacher or school administrator to learn if staff are available by phone or video conference.*