

What to Ask at a Parent-Teacher Conference

Effective parent involvement includes a range of actions from reading and talking with children and asking “What did you learn today?” to attending parent-teacher conferences and helping children and youth make good choices about what they do after school and in the summer.¹⁶

Overview

Take advantage of parent-teacher conferences during the school year. Think of some questions and concerns you may have and write them down before your meeting. Keep track of your child’s schoolwork to help you with your questions. You are in a position to share important information, as well as ask questions. Remember, you can and should talk to your child’s teacher throughout the year.

Questions to ask for students in all grades:

- Is my child performing at grade level?
- What are my child’s strengths and weaknesses in reading, math, and science?
- How much time should my child spend on homework?
- Are my child’s assignments completed accurately?
- Does the school have special programs to meet my child’s needs?
- Does my child have special learning needs? Are there special classes my child should be in?
- Do you keep a folder of my child’s work? If yes, could you review it with me?
- Does my child have close friends? How well does my child get along with the other students?
- What can we do at home to support classroom learning?
- What is the best way to keep in touch with you?

Additional questions for middle and high school students:

- How can I help my child to work independently and make the best use of time?
- How can I help my child prepare for high school?
- What can you tell me about peer pressure and how I can help my child handle difficult situations—drugs, alcohol, and sex?
- What courses should my child take to satisfy graduation requirements?
- Do you have a list of courses my child should take to be ready to enter college?
- If my child plans to attend college, how will the school help with the application process?
- If my child plans to attend college, how will the school help my child find out about financial aid?

Get Involved – It Matters!

Overview

Being involved in your children’s education helps him/her do well in school and improves the quality of your child’s school. Parents can be engaged at many different levels and simple activities like reading a book together, helping with homework and emphasizing the importance of school and academic success can and does make a difference!

Here are some suggestions on how to get started.¹⁷

- Take your child to school on the first day.
- Let your child know that school is important. Be sure to ask questions about homework and set up a quiet place for your child to work.
- Read everything that is sent home from school: report cards, homework assignments, school lunch plans, and vacation and bus schedules. Show your child that you are well informed.
- Get to know your child’s teachers and school principal by attending school meetings and parent-teacher conferences.
- Ask for copies of school policies (e.g., attendance and discipline). If there is something you do not understand, ask questions.
- Volunteer to help with school activities. Attend sports events, assist with fundraisers, or volunteer to work in the school office.
- Visit your child’s classroom when class is in session, not just at parent-teacher conferences. Set this up in advance with the school office and the teacher.
- Talk to other parents. If there is a parent organization, join it. If there is no parent organization at your school, think about starting one. Finding two or three other interested parents is a good start.
- Encourage your child to read at home. Visit local libraries or used book mobiles, school libraries, or book fairs to pick out books together. Pick out books to read together and talk about them.
- Being involved in a child’s education is just as important for step-parents, grandparents, and other adults who care for a child. Invite people who care for your child to participate in school activities.
- Your actions, not just your words, make an impression that will last a lifetime.