
Ideas For Great Parent/Teacher Conferences



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KidsTalk
ONLINE WORKSHOPS

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For many of us, the most dreaded event during our school years was...being sent to the principal's office.

Unfortunately, some of those childhood memories make it difficult for us to be enthusiastic about going to meet with our child's teacher. I'll share a few tips on how to feel comfortable, as a parent or a teacher, at a student conference.

As a parent, remember:

This conference is about your child and his or her development. It's an opportunity to create partnership with your child's teachers and for you to gain additional insights about your child.

Children, and most of us, usually meet expectations, especially when the expectations are clear.

Sometimes, though, children have issues we don't see as parents.

We're too close.

Teachers may see behaviors we don't see at home.

As parents, we may also see behavior that the teacher will not have the opportunity to see.

Neither one of us may be wrong in our perceptions. We're just holding different pieces of the puzzle.

As a teacher:

1. I liked to start a conference with a short anecdote about the child that helped the parents feel confident that I knew their child.

An example:

Last week Jackson was so excited that he finally memorized all his multiplication table. He asked to go outside so he could do a victory dance. Jackson really enjoys setting his own goals and celebrating when he gets there.

2. I focused on asking a few key questions:

- Do you have any concerns about Jackson's learning?
- Does Jackson voice any concerns about his work at school?
- Is there anything you would like me to know?

When I focused on listening and asking questions, as a teacher, I felt that I was able to address parents' concerns directly and quickly.

As a parent:

1. I tried to tell the teacher a story that my daughter had told me about her schoolwork.

An example:

Dana played Twinkle Twinkle on her friend's violin. She told me she learned how to do it at school. I appreciate that the children in your classroom teach each other.

2. I asked the teacher a couple of questions:

- Do you have any concerns about my daughter's learning?
- Is there anything you would like me to know?

3. I came prepared.

- I brought pen and paper to take notes.
- I came ready to listen to the teachers and to try to understand what they were telling me.

- If there were an issue I used these probing questions to find out more: Who, what, when, where, why and how.
- I focused on my child's needs and avoided blaming myself or the teacher for the situation. Parenting should be guilt-free!
- I remembered that I was an advocate for my child in her growth and development.
- I shared ideas on how I worked with my child at home.
- I got my daughters involved in the process, if needed.
- If we ran out of time I planned a follow-up conversation.

As a parent:

Let's look at a situation with Madison to illustrate how to use some of these ideas.

Madison's teacher says she is having difficulties with math.

- It's important to listen and take notes while giving the teacher time to voice all her concerns.
- Gather more information by asking the who-what-when-where-why and how questions.
- Perhaps we might ask some questions like these:
 - What math problems are difficult for Madison?
 - When did this start? Does it happen everyday?
 - Where does Madison sit in class?
 - How does Madison try to solve the math problem?
 - Who can she go to for help?
 - How can I help?
 - Why do you think she is having this difficulty?
 - When can we visit about this situation again?
- Share some activities that Madison likes to do at home.
- Also, we need to be sure to thank everyone—parent, teacher, administrator— in the conference. It's a lot easier to meet with appreciative people.
- Next, after visiting with the teacher, we should visit with Madison and involve her in the situation by saying something like: *Your teacher mentioned today that you are having some difficulties learning your addition facts. What do you think?*
- This is the time to listen and ask how to help.

Summary:

These suggestions can help you have a productive discussion with your child's teacher by focusing on your child's needs while listening to your child's teacher's concerns.

A parent/teacher conference is an opportunity to work in partnership to meet your child's developmental learning needs.

That's good news. So, relax. And don't worry about being sent to the principal's office!

Let's put this into action!

What tip are you going to use at your next parent/teacher conference?

For more put-it-into action ideas:

Head on over to <https://MarenSchmidt.com> where you have lots of resources available as a Kids Talk Reader.