

November, 2009

Dear Parents:

We are just a few days away from the end of our first reporting period and our fall parent-teacher conferences. This is a good time to share with you some tips on enhancing the success of your up-coming conference.

How To Make Parent-Teacher Conferences Work for Your Child: Remember, all children learn in different ways. They have their own individual personalities, listening skills and work habits. To help their students learn new knowledge and skills, teachers must know as much as they can about each child. No one knows more about these things than you, the parents. And no one has more influence over your children than you. That's why teachers need your help to do a first-class job. Working together, you and the teacher can help your child have a successful school year.

Here Are Some Things To Keep in Mind. Start the conference right, be there on time, and plan not to run over the amount of time that has been set aside, about 20 minutes. If you are a working parent who can't arrange to meet during regular hours, make this clear to the teacher and try to set up a time to meet that is good for both of you. The best conferences are those in which both teachers and parents stay calm and try hard to work together for one purpose and one purpose only: to help your child do well.

You Should Get Ready For Each Conference, Too. Talk to your children before the conference. (Some teachers may have also invited your child to attend.) Find out what they think are their best subjects, and what subjects they like the least. Find out why. Also, ask your children if there is anything they would like you to talk about with their teachers. Make sure your children don't worry about the meeting. Help them understand that you and their teacher(s) are meeting together in order to help them.

Before You Go To The School, Write Notes To Yourself About:

- things about your child's life at home, personality, problems, habits, and hobbies you feel it's important for the teacher to know
- any concerns you may have
- questions about your child's progress
- how you and the school can work together to help your child

At The Conference. Some good questions to ask are these:

- Is my child in different groups for different subjects? Why?
- How well does my child get along with others?
- What are my child's best subjects? What subject does my child struggle with the most?
- Is my child working up to his or her ability?
- Does my child participate in class discussions and activities?
- What do the tests tell about my child's progress?
- How does my child handle taking tests?

It's A Good Idea To Ask Your Most Important Questions First, Just In Case Time Runs Out Before You And The Teacher Have A Chance To Discuss Them All. Be sure to ask the teacher for specific suggestions on ways to help your child do better. This is the most important part of the meeting. It will become your action plan. If the teacher says something you don't quite understand, don't be shy about asking for an explanation. It's a good idea to end the conference by summing up decisions you've made together. Afterward, work the plan for improvement together. There is nothing more powerful than parents and teachers working together for the good of a child. (These tips were adapted from the National Education Association website: <http://www.nea.org/parents/ptconf.html>)

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