Prepare for a Successful Conference

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

- Find out your child's questions and concerns about school. -
- Check progress reports, report cards and work your child has brought home.
- Write a list of questions you want to ask the teacher. Start with the form in this brochure and add to it. Bring your list to the meeting with you.
- Write down information about your child that the teacher should know, such as a family death, divorce, changed finances, illness or a new home. -
- If you need a ride, childcare or a different time or day for the conference, the school can help. Call the school office and ask.
- If English is not your first language, have someone contact the school before the parent-teacher conference and request an interpreter to assist you during the meeting.

AT THE CONFERENCE

- Let the teacher begin the meeting but be sure to ask the questions on your list before time runs out.
- Ask the teacher what your child should know and be able to do by the end of the school year. Make a plan for how you and the teacher will work with your child to reach those goals.
- Find out the best way (notes, phone calls, e-mail) and the best time to communicate with the teacher throughout the school year.

Continue the Conversation Through the Year

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

- Talk with your child about what the teacher told you, especially the positive comments. Talk about learning goals and make a plan to reach them together.
- Follow up on the plan you made with your child and the teacher every few weeks.
- Check your child's backpack daily for materials sent home from school. Read all of it. If English is not your first language, ask a relative or friend to read the school information to you in your language.
- Contact the teacher whenever you have questions. If your child is not doing well, set up a regular check-in schedule with the teacher to monitor progress. If English is not your first language, get a friend to help you contact the teacher or to ask the school office for an interpreter.
- Send the teacher a thank you note when something good happens in the classroom. -
- Make sure your child knows that school is important. Talk with your child every day about school, attend school events, offer to help from home, volunteer in the classroom, join the parent organization.

Office of the Education Ombudsman

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Contact the Office of the Education Ombudsman if you'd like to receive this document in an alternative format to accommodate people with disabilities.

The Office of the Education Ombudsman provides information and referral services to students, families and communities regarding the public education system, promotes family and community involvement in education, and helps families and students resolve conflict with schools.





Make the Most of Parent-Teacher Conferences

Office of the Education Ombudsman A Guide for Families of Elementary School Students



State of Washington Office of the Governor

Attend Parent-Teacher Conferences

Most schools invite every family to a parentteacher conference once a year. A conference is a time for parents and teachers to share information, solve problems, and form a relationship that will help the student succeed. You don't need to wait for a special invitation though. You can request a meeting with your child's teacher to discuss academic progress at any time.

The teacher needs to hear from you and you need to hear from the teacher. You know more about your child than anyone at school. Talking with the teacher about your child will help pave the way for your student to do well in class and will help you understand what is being taught in the classroom.

Conferences are usually short and to the point. These tips will help you make the most of your time with your child's teacher.

Parent-Teacher Conference Notes

Mark the questions that are most important to you, and add others. Take this form to your conference.

QUESTIONS FOR THE TEACHER

□ Can you show me some of my child's work?

Does my child finish assignments in class and turn in homework?

□ Does my child join in class discussions?

- □ Are you pleased with my child's progress?
- □ What does my child do well? What is my child having a hard time with?

□ Where can we go for help?

- How does my child behave in the classroom and on the playground?
- Have there been changes recently that I should know about?

□ How do you handle discipline?

□ What are your expectations of my child?

- What tests will you give this year? How does my child need to prepare?
- Are any big projects coming up? How can I help my child?
- □ When do you send report cards?

□ What are grades based on?

- What is the best way for us to stay in touch about my child's progress through the year?
- □ How many students are in this class?

- □ Do you have a teacher's aide? Do you use parent volunteers in the classroom?
- What suggestions do you have for me to get involved with school, and to help my child succeed?
- May I have a schedule of parent meetings and open houses during the school year?
- □ How is my child's culture reflected in the classroom learning time?

Space for notes

THINGS TO TELL THE TEACHER

□ How my child learns best.

- Any big changes in the family—a new home, new people in the home, death or divorce.
- □ Medical conditions that affect my child.
- □ What has helped my child learn successfully in the past.
- □ What my child enjoys about school and the classroom.
- What is most challenging for my child in this class.

Space for notes

FOLLOW-UP PLANS Teacher contact information

Things to do -