

Parent-Teacher Conference Kit

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So many questions, so little time

The average parent-teacher conference lasts only 20 minutes, and time sure flies when you're talking about your child! Here's how you can make the most of every minute: Choose from the situations below to get a custom list of questions to ask the teacher.

- 1) My child and the teacher don't get along.
 - 2) My child is struggling academically.
 - 3) My child is not challenged.
 - 4) My child is having a tough time socially.
 - 5) My child is doing well. What is there to talk about?
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1) *My child and the teacher don't get along.*

Questions you should ask:

1. Is my child behaving appropriately in the classroom?
2. Are you aware that my child is finding it difficult to work with you?
3. What suggestions do you have about ways my child could improve his relationship with you?
4. Do you have any ideas about how you might get along better with my child?
5. Do you feel that a transfer to another class would be in the best interest of my child?

Tips for talking with the teacher:

1. Approach the conference with a cooperative attitude toward resolving the situation. Avoid confrontation.
2. Make a list of the positive and negative experiences your child is having at school and share them with the teacher.
3. Remember that you have only heard half of the story. Could your child be overreacting to a situation?
4. Listen carefully to your child's comments about what is going on at school and help him find ways to handle the situation.
5. Visit the classroom to monitor your child's perception of the situation.

2) *My child is struggling academically.*

Questions you should ask:

1. What is my child's ability level?
2. What exactly do you feel is the problem or problems that are causing my child to struggle in school this year?
3. What special help can the school offer my child to get him or her on track academically as quickly as possible?
4. Would it be appropriate to test my child for a learning disability?
5. How can I help my child do better in school?

Tips for talking with the teacher:

1. Begin right away to work with your child on homework every night. Give assistance when it is required.
2. Study your child's daily papers carefully, and help her correct any mistakes.
3. Teach your child study skills such as reading directions carefully, studying examples in textbooks, and writing down assignments.
4. Collect information about your child's performance at school to can closely monitor progress.
5. Learn about your child's legal rights to have the school provide special help under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504, and IDEA.

3) *My child is not challenged.*

Questions you should ask:

1. How is my child doing academically in your class?
2. Do you feel my child is breezing through class assignments with little or no effort?
3. Could you make class assignments that are more challenging for my child?
4. Does the school have a formal program for gifted and talented children? Should my child be tested for it?
5. What can I do at home to enhance my child's educational experience?

Tips for talking with the teacher:

1. Discuss with the teacher the possibility of your child spending less time with curriculum he has mastered and more time with extension and enrichment opportunities.
2. Quite often, it falls upon parents to expand the school's curriculum in such ways that their children find it more challenging and interesting.
3. Visit Internet sites (www.nagc.org and <http://ericec.org/gifted/gt-menu.htm>) to find ideas about how to challenge bright children.
4. Consider enrolling your child in some enrichment classes or activities either after school or on Saturdays. School districts, colleges, and museums offer this type of program.
5. Join a parents' group involved in the education of gifted children.

4) *My child is having a tough time socially.*

Questions you should ask:

1. Does my child have any friends at school?
2. Why do you feel my child is having problems socializing with other children?
3. Is there anything you can do in the classroom to help my child feel more comfortable around her peers?
4. Do you have any suggestions about what I could do at home to help my child get along better with her classmates?
5. Would it be a good idea for my child to talk to the school counselor or psychologist about ways to improve his socialization skills?

Tips for talking to the teacher:

1. Try to make your home a friendly place that attracts children.
2. Invite a classmate to your home to play with your child.
3. Have your child participate in programs that bolster her interests and give her new skills (karate, music, scouting) and friends.
4. Let your child see you in social interactions so that she will have an appropriate role model.
5. Children with friends at school are generally better off than those without; however, solid relationships with family members, neighborhood children, and other adults are good substitutes.

5) *My child is doing well. What is there to talk about?*

Questions you should ask:

1. What grade level is my child performing on in reading, math, social studies, and science?
2. How is my child doing in relation to the rest of the class? (Is my child performing in the top 25 percent? Top 10 percent?)
3. What do you see as my child's strengths and weaknesses?
4. Could you tell me about my child's work ethic, relations with other children, behavior in class, and attitude toward learning?
5. Can you tell me what academic topics and skills will be emphasized this year in your classroom?

Tips for talking to the teacher:

1. Give the teacher extra information about your child to help him or her know the child better.
2. Express your appreciation to the teacher for the good year your child is having at school.
3. Ask the teacher if there is anything special you could do to help in the classroom this year.
4. Talk to your child each day about what is going on in school, and be sure to praise the effort he is putting into getting a good education.
5. Keep doing what you are doing so your child continues to have a productive year at school.