

- Are homework help, tutoring, or other programs available for students who need additional support?

How should you follow up?

- **Make a plan.** Write down the things that you and the teacher will each do to support your child. You can do this during or after the conference. Write down what you, the teacher, and the child will need to do, when, and how often. Make plans to check in with the teacher in the coming months.
- **Schedule another time to talk.** Communication should go both ways. Ask how you can contact the teacher. And do not forget to ask how the teacher will contact you. There are many ways to communicate—in person, by phone, notes, e-mail. Make a plan that works for both of you. Make sure the school has your updated contact information and schedule at least one more time to talk with the teacher in the next few months.
- **Talk to your child.** The parent-teacher conference is all about your child, so don't forget to include him or her. Tell your child what you learned and share the action plan you worked out with the teacher. Explain how you will help with learning at home and discuss what the child needs to do. Ask for his or her suggestions.

Remember that every child is different and special. Each has a distinct personality and different interests; each responds to different stimuli and learns in different ways. Children are taking their first steps in discovering the world and may not always make the best decisions. Each child and adolescent has the potential to change the world by making their choices and pursuing their dreams. Supporting, leading and encouraging them in their pursuits, we, too, have the ability to change the world for the better. Let's do it together!

Adapted from "Parent-Teacher Conference Tip Sheets for Principals, Teachers, and Parents", Harvard Family Research Project (<http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/parent-teacher-conference-tip-sheets-for-principals-teachers-and-parents>) and "Preparing for a Successful Parent-Teacher Conference" by Diane Milne (<http://www.education.com/magazine/article/tips-successful-parent-teacher-conference>).

Office of Parent, Family, Community Engagement & Faith-Based Partnerships

440 N. Broad Street, Room 114, Philadelphia, PA 19130

 (215) 400-4180 |  www.philasd.org/parentuniversity

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA Office of Parent, Family, Community Engagement & Faith-Based Partnerships



How To Make Parent-Teacher Conferences Work for Your Child



Students spend only a quarter of their active hours at school. During this time they need to work hard at acquiring the knowledge and skills which will form a foundation for their future success in life.

People with a solid education in reading, math, writing, social studies and science will have better prospects of employment, earn higher salaries, make a greater contribution to society, and lead a more fulfilling life. But many other factors also contribute to success, including the qualities of creativity, intellectual curiosity, motivation, independence and resilience; and the skills of analytical and critical thinking, problem solving, communication, organization, time management and developing interpersonal relationships.

Working together with your child's teacher will help you ensure that your child succeeds not only academically, but socially and emotionally as well. When parents and teachers work hand in hand every day to support and supplement each other's efforts, they can build a strong foundation for the success of a child.

This tip sheet will help you start a conversation with the teacher about your child's education – a conversation that will grow into a partnership, with you and the teacher working together to support the child.

What should you expect?

The Harvard Family Research Project suggests that a good parent-teacher conference should incorporate the following characteristics:

▶ *A two-way conversation.*

Like all good conversations, parent-teacher conferences are best when both participants talk and listen. The conference is a time for you to learn about your child's progress in



school: ask to see data about your child's attendance, grades and test scores. Find out whether your child is meeting school expectations and academic standards.

This is also a time for the teacher to learn about what your child is like at home. When you tell the teacher about your child's skills, interests, needs and dreams, the teacher can help your child more.

► ***Emphasis on learning.***

Effective parent–teacher conferences focus on how well the child is doing in school. They also talk about how the child can improve. To get ready for the conversation, look at your child's homework, tests and school notices before the conference. Be sure to bring a list of questions that you would like to ask the teacher.

► ***Opportunities and challenges.***

Just like you, teachers want your child to succeed. You will probably hear positive feedback about your child's progress and areas for improvement. Be prepared by thinking about your child's strengths and challenges beforehand. Be ready to ask questions about ways you and the teacher can help your child with his or her challenges.

Before the conference:

- **Review your schedule.** If you can't come to school at the scheduled time, ask the teacher about other times when you can arrange a meeting. If coming to school is a problem, schedule a telephone conference.
- **Talk with your child about school.** What goes well? What subjects and assignments does the child like and do well at, and what assignments seem challenging? Is there anything the child doesn't understand or struggles with?
- **Review your child's work, grades, and progress reports.**
- **Talk with others**—family members, after-school staff, mentors, etc.—about your child's strengths and needs.
- **Think about ways you would like to be involved in your child's learning** so that you can discuss them with the teacher.
- **Make a list of questions to ask during the conference.**

Here are some of the questions you may have on your list:

1. Academic Content and Standards:

- What will the students learn this year in key subjects like Math, Science, History, and English?
- What knowledge and skills will the students be expected to master?

- How do these knowledge and skills correspond to state and national standards?
- How can parents learn more about the state and national standards?
- How are the students informed about these standards?

2. Progress:

- How is my child doing in class?
- Does my child turn in his or her homework on time?
- Is my child performing at grade level?
- How is he or she doing compared to the rest of the class?
- What do you see as his or her strengths?
- How could he or she improve?

3. Assignments and Assessments:

- What kinds of projects and assignments will the students be asked to complete?
- Can I see some of the assignments completed?
- How are the assignments evaluated?
- How is the final grade determined?

4. Learning at Home:

- What can we do at home to support and complement what is happening in the classroom?
- How can we know on a daily basis what homework has been assigned?
- What additional resources (books, websites, clubs) can we use?
- Share any strategies you are already using or are thinking about using at home to support the child's academic success.

5. Your Thoughts about Your Child:

- Be sure to share your thoughts and feelings about your child.
- Tell the teacher what you think your child is good at.
- Explain what he or she needs more help with.

6. Accommodating Differences in Learning:

- What happens if the child is a slow learner and falls behind, or is a fast learner and is bored? What can the teacher do to support your child when he or she needs it?
- What additional supports for students performing above or below their grade level are available at the school or in the community?