

MOVING FORWARD

A Guide for Conversations with Your Child's Teacher



When you work together as a team with educators, students do better in school. The parent-teacher conversation is a wonderful opportunity to begin this partnership.

IMPORTANT TIPS

Before the Conversation

1. Look over school work and your child's standardized test scores

How does it look like your child is doing? Is the homework too easy or too hard? Does your child need help? What strengths and weaknesses do your child's test scores show? Do the results show any gaps in learning that need to be addressed?

2. Talk with your child

Ask your child how school is going. What is most enjoyable and least enjoyable? How does your child feel about school?

3. Make a list of questions

What do you want to know about how your child is doing in school? Be prepared to let the teacher know anything you think is important about your child, such as activities that have helped your child in the past. (See Possible Questions on page 2.)

During the Conversation

1. Focus on your child's learning needs

Even if you disagree with the educator, the conversation will remain productive if you focus on how you both can work together to meet your child's needs. A calm discussion and respectful tone will help you reach the best solutions quicker.

2. Ask the most important questions first

Because teachers often have other parents to see, remember that sometimes time is limited. Try to cover the most important questions and concerns first. However, if you are not able to cover everything, ask for a follow-up meeting with the teacher.

3. Figure out next steps

At the end of the conference, ask what the teacher can do to help your child and discuss what you can do at home. Ask about a follow-up meeting if necessary or if there are any school services that might help your child be successful in school.

After the Conversation

1. Update your child

Talk to your child about what you learned at the conference. Be sure to share anything positive that you and the teacher discussed about your child. However, don't hesitate to discuss any concerns or challenges. Make sure your child knows what the next steps are.

2. Follow up

If you and the teacher agreed on next steps, be sure to follow up to see how things are going. If necessary, schedule a follow-up meeting with the teacher.



POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

- » What is my child expected to learn this year?
- » How are you measuring my child's progress? Through tests? Portfolios? Class participation? Projects?
- » What types of tests and evaluations will my child have to take this year?
- » How does my child handle taking tests?
- » What are my child's strongest and weakest areas?
- » Does my child hand in homework on time?
- » Is my child participating in class discussions and activities?
- » Is my child trying as hard as possible?
- » How are my child's social skills? How well does my child get along with others?
- » Does my child seem happy at school?
- » Have you noticed changes in the way my child acts?
- » Is my child learning at the highest level possible?
- » What can I do at home to help support my child's academic progress?

OTHER TIPS

- » Contact your child's teacher if you are unavailable during any school established parent-teacher conference dates.
- » Schedule a conference with your child's teacher if the school does not have scheduled parent-teacher conferences.
- » Complete and return all school/classroom parent surveys.
- » Discuss any concerns your child has raised without assigning blame.
- » Work with the teacher to develop a specific plan to address any issues and set up a way to check on your child's progress at school and at home.
- » Have regular conversations with your child's teachers even if your child is doing well in school.



- » Keep your contact information current with your child's school, and keep your child's teacher's email and phone number where you can easily find them.
- » Find "teachable moments" in your daily activities and always find ways to keep learning fun.
- » Keep in touch with the teacher throughout the year.

Adapted from information available at Understood.org.

