

Frequently asked questions

What is a parent-teacher conference?

A parent-teacher conference is a meeting between you and your child's teacher to discuss your child's progress in school. Parent-teacher conferences happen in elementary, middle, and high schools. This meeting may take place as part of the regularly-scheduled conferences held by the school each year, or your child's teacher may contact you to schedule a meeting at other times during the school year.

You can also request a conference with your child's teacher if you have questions or concerns about your child by contacting the teacher to set up a meeting.

How will I know when to go to the conference?

Usually, your child's teacher will contact you to schedule a meeting time. If you work during the day and can only go to conferences after working hours, be sure to let your child's teacher know that so you can schedule a meeting time that is convenient for both of you.

What if I don't speak English?

If you do not feel comfortable speaking with your child's teacher in English, you have the right to request that an interpreter attend the conference, or to bring an interpreter that you trust to the conference. If you request an interpreter from the school, make the request at least 24 hours before the conference. Your child's school also may have a bilingual parent liaison who can help you find an interpreter. It's important to find a way to overcome the language barrier in order to meet with your child's teacher.

Why does my child's teacher want to meet with me?

In the U.S. educational system, teachers believe that a strong partnership between the home and school will help children succeed in school. If your child's teacher schedules a meeting with you, it does not necessarily mean that your child is in trouble. Teachers welcome input from the parents about their children, such as information about what the child likes to do or what they are good at. Teachers also understand that each student is different and learns differently, and that no one knows your child better than you do. You may provide some insight that will help the teacher work more effectively with your child at school.

It is also helpful for teachers to know if a child is experiencing a difficult situation outside of school, such as a divorce, the death of a relative, a medical problem, or anything else that may affect the child's mood or behavior. Knowing of such changes will help the teacher provide the child with the necessary support in the classroom.

What information will my child's teacher give me?

Your child's teacher will probably show you some samples of your child's work, and may discuss your child's progress, grades, homework, and behavior. The teacher may also ask you about any concerns that she has about your child, as well as questions about his study habits. These questions are intended to help the teacher provide your child with any additional support needed in the classroom, and are not intended to make you feel uncomfortable or defensive.

Why is it important to go to a parent-teacher conference?

Going to the parent-teacher conference provides you and the teacher an opportunity to work together as a team in order to help your child. You each have an important perspective to share — as the parent, you know your child's personality, habits, strengths, and weaknesses. The teacher, on the other hand, has been trained professionally in the best methods of teaching, meeting individual student's needs, how to control classroom behavior, and how to help your child succeed in school. Working together you will be able to find ways that each of you can provide the appropriate and necessary support for your child.

The conference is also an opportunity for you to ask questions about your child's progress, to learn more about the class and what the students are studying, and to find out if your child is having difficulty with anything in particular.

In addition, the more you know about your children's school and classes, the more likely they will be to talk about daily experiences with you. They will appreciate your concern and involvement, and they will be more likely to approach you when they have problems.