

Making the Most of a Parent Teacher Conference

Meetings with a teacher over your child's work is a time to celebrate good learning that is taking place in the classroom—as well as to make plans for how you can work together to foster even more growth. All parents deserve to know about grade level requirements and specific ways they can help their children become more powerful learners. By taking a little time to think about the purpose of a conference in advance, you will make the most of this chance to get to know the teacher and make good plans for your child. Here are some things to think about before you go to a conference:

- **Set a convenient time for the meeting.** Allow yourself a few extra minutes in your schedule to relax before the meeting so that you go into the conference relaxed and focused. It helps to reflect on your child's interests and strengths and write down specific comments and questions for the teacher. Notes will jog your memory about any issues that you want to discuss.
- **Be punctual and limit your meeting time,** especially when other parents are scheduled before and after your conference with the teacher. If you find there are more issues to discuss and time is limited, schedule another meeting. This gives you more time to think about the issues, and it also allows other parents who may be waiting to have their turn.
- **If you find that there is something you do not understand** about the purpose of the meeting, such as test result scores or jargon used to request a meeting, be sure to ask for an explanation.
- **Make sure it is clear whether or not your child is expected to attend** the conference. Some teachers encourage students to participate with parents in the meeting. Other teachers and parents prefer that students not be present to discuss sensitive information.
- **During the conference, as you discuss your child's academic work,** ask to see specific assignments or projects. What projects or units is the class working on currently? Ask your teacher what games or activities at home could be used to extend and enrich classroom activities.
- **As the meeting is ending, set a future meeting time** or exchange convenient times to discuss your child's progress. Although you may not need to contact each other right away, knowing convenient times will make contact easier in the future.
- **Be sure to discuss the meeting with your child.** Whether your child has attended the meeting or not, the goals and information discussed are important to share and will demonstrate to your child that the school and home are working together to support him or her.