



5 Tips for Parents to Have a Successful Parent/Teacher Conference

By Shawnta S. Barnes – October 18, 2018

As an educator, I used to be a little nervous when parent/teacher conferences came around. I wanted to ensure I provided parents with the right information to help them support their child. When my children began kindergarten during the 2016-17 school year, I realized parents are just as nervous as the teachers. Most schools are getting ready to issue the first report card of the school year. Many schools schedule parent/teacher conferences to coincide with the first report to ensure students are on track or to help them get on track for the remainder of the

year. Here are five tips for having a successful parent/teacher conference with your child's teacher.

1. Attend the conference with another person.

This one might not always be possible, but having another pair of ears and eyes can be helpful. Rarely do I attend conferences alone. I have attended conferences for my children with my dad, mom, and husband. When it comes to our children, parents can get emotional or even misinterpret what is being said. It is helpful to have someone else there to help you stay objective. This person can also help support you if the teacher is not being reasonable.

2. Speak to special area or elective teachers.

Teachers who teach gym, art, music, etc. many times get overlooked during conferences. Because they are certified employees, they are required to be at the school the entire evening of parent/teacher conferences. Make sure you stop by their rooms. My sons have a talent for art. I was aware they could draw well, but having a conversation with the art teacher allowed me to understand their particular art strengths. Also talking to the music teacher allowed me to learn that my identical twin sons had been pretending to be each other on some days.

3. Write down questions you want to ask before the conference.

The teacher will have points to discuss. They may even have topics mandated by the principal. If the teacher is coming prepared with topics, parents should also. Conferences can be 15-30 minutes, so make those minutes count. I normally limit my list to two-three questions. Questions I have asked in the past were:

A. What are my child's strengths and weaknesses?

B. What can I do to help my child improve academically and socially?

C. What can I do to support you in the classroom?

4. Bring a folder to keep track of documents.

Conferences are a perfect opportunity for teachers to give you academic data or your child's work. It is important you keep these documents. These documents show you where your child is at that moment in time. This can be a point of reference as you support your child's teacher in helping your child to continue to grow at school.

5. Check out your child's desk or locker and supplies.

Looking through your child's stuff can reveal much about how your child operates at school. Can't figure out why homework isn't getting turned in? Maybe your child doesn't have his or her binder organized. Can't figure out why your child hasn't brought the literature textbook to class? Maybe your child forgot his or his locker combination and has been sharing a locker with a friend. As a teacher, I always invite parents to check out their child's spaces at school.

If you are a parent or an educator and have other tips, leave them in the comment section or comment on our social media.