



Parents, Are You Prepared for School Conference Time?

By Educator Barnes – September 26, 2019

Many schools are preparing for their first conferences with parents. Unlike Back-to-School Night where parents receive general information about the school, a conference with your child's teacher is a time to focus on your child. Parents should be prepared for conferences to maximize their impact. Here are some suggestions for what you should do.

Know when the conferences are

I cannot tell you how many times a parent called me a week after conferences trying to find out when the conferences were. Then, I had to inform the parent that conferences took place the

prior week. (If you don't know, don't get an attitude with the teacher). Most educators will still schedule a time to meet with you even if you miss the date of the actual conference, but please know this puts a burden on the teacher. Some schools close so teachers can have conferences all day, so meeting with you after that time will mean the teacher will have to sacrifice time from something else.

Look at your child's work and grades

You should not arrive at conferences without knowing about your child's progress. Papers come home at least weekly, and grades are being put into the gradebook. Almost every school has parent access to grades online. Most even have an app so you can view grades on your phone. There are those teachers who are slipping and cannot seem to put grades in the gradebook consistently or in a timely manner. That's why you check. It is not fair to your child for a teacher to put all the grades in right before they are due. Then, you don't have any recourse to help your child if he or she is failing. Yes, I have inquired about my sons' grades and asked where were they. If you are doing your part and are checking your child's backpack and grades and you have no information about your child's progress, don't leave that conference until you get it.

Write down questions to ask

Conferences are typically scheduled back to back. The teacher is watching the clock and trying to get through all the information. Knowing this, you have to prioritize your questions. I always start with academics. Some teachers want to tell you how bad your kid is first. That is no way to start a conference. Make sure your child is learning because poor behavior sometimes is a way for your child who is struggling to escape school work. Last, if you don't write it down, you might forget.

Follow up in a couple of weeks

It doesn't matter how much you follow up, teachers are obligated to engage and respond to parents. If the teacher expresses concerns, make sure you circle back and see how your child is doing in a couple of weeks.

Please don't miss your child's conference. It is one of the best ways to get an update on your child.