



Parents, Don't Be Passive During Parent/Teacher Conferences

By Educator Barnes – October 31, 2021

Parent/Teacher conferences typically take place about halfway through the first semester of school. It takes time for teachers to get to know their students, and the timing of conferences allows teachers to complete assessments and have a good idea of what their students know and areas where they struggle. Conferences are the time for teachers to share this information with students' parents. Parents should not only be at conferences to receive information. It should be a dialogue.

Parents should come to conferences and take notes whether that be on their cellphone or in a notepad. This allows parents to have a record of what they were told. In the same place where parents take notes, they can write down questions they would like to ask. Once a conversation gets going, it is easy for parents to forget what they wanted to ask. A few inquiries parents can make are:

1. What can I do at home to support my children academically?
2. Are there any issues with them interacting with others?
3. What are your late work and homework policies?
4. Do you allow students to redo work they did not master?
5. What is the best way to communicate with you? Email? Phone? School App? Scheduled appointment?
6. How can I check my children's grades?

The parent and teacher relationship is important for student success. In addition to asking questions, parents should share information with their children's teachers that will be helpful to know for their academic and social-emotional success in the classroom. If parents know their child gets extremely anxious when there is a test, this is important information to share. If there are any life changes that are impacting a child's mental health, the parents should consider sharing this information. Information sharing from parents allows teachers to be proactive in hopes of helping the children in advance instead of responding after.

Towards the end of the conference, parents should ask when they should follow up to check on their child's progress in areas they need to improve. If the child does not have areas of growth, parents should ask what activities they can do to push their children's abilities.

Parents should come to conferences ready to engage in conversation and not attend only to receive information.

Some schools have shifted to student-led conferences ... stay tuned for tips about those conferences.