

# Parents Matter

Volume 1, No. 5



## Getting the Most out of Parent Teacher Meetings

One of the best things we can do to help our children be successful in school is to take advantage of parent teacher meetings. As children get older, these meetings might be one of the only opportunities you'll have to interact with their teachers and learn how you can be supportive of the learning process. These meetings also provide valuable insight into how your children handle themselves and interact with others—information often not reflected in grades alone.

As I walked out of my oldest child's meeting last week, I regretted not preparing for it in advance. If we as parents come prepared with questions, relevant back-story and suggestions for teachers as to how they can best connect with our children, fifteen minutes of face time with them can make a difference in our children's school experience.

Next year, I plan to prepare a bit before I attend parent teacher meetings by following some of the strategies listed below:

### **Talk to your child before the conference:**

- Ask if he or she has any questions or concerns about the class.
- Also ask if there is anything he or she'd like you to discuss with the teacher.

### **Questions to ask teachers at the conference:**

- Does your child ask questions in class?
- Does your child seem engaged and curious about class material?
- What are your child's strengths?
- Where are your child's growth opportunities?
- Is there anything the teachers notice about your child that they believe is important for you to know?
- How can you support the teachers' efforts in your home?

### **Information to provide:**

- Any significant struggles your child is having with class content, homework, peer relations, etc. that may influence potential success in the class.
- Anything significant happening at home or outside of school that is impacting your student's attendance and/or performance in the class.
- Areas of passion or particular interest that teachers can use to connect with your child.
- Occurrences when your child has made connections in his or her world as a result of the information they are learning in the class.
- Any information you have about your child's learning style preferences, problem-solving strategies, etc.
- Anything that the teachers can do to support parenting efforts you are working on at home.

### **Schedule for updates:**

- If there is a particular issue your child is having with a certain class or teacher, set up a time to check-in several weeks following the meeting, either through an e-mail, note or phone call, to discuss goals or strategies that you've identified during the meeting.

**Review with your child after the meeting:**

- Share any pertinent information you glean from the teachers. It's nice for your child to know that someone notices that he or she asks questions or seems curious, is helpful to peers, or takes initiative.
- At the same time, sharing teachers' perspectives on growth opportunities can set the stage for exciting and rewarding goal-setting opportunities for your child to explore.

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**Another Parent Tip From...**

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