



Parent-Teacher Conferences: Helpful Tips & Questions

Getting ready for a parent-teacher conference or a student-led parent-teacher conference? Don't have a conference scheduled but you want to talk to your child's teacher and just don't know what questions to ask? The average parent-teacher conference lasts only 20 minutes, and time sure flies when you're talking about your child! Here's how you can make the most of every minute:

Note: If you know your child is struggling in school, don't wait for a scheduled conference. Contact your child's teacher and set a meeting immediately.

Before and After You Go:

- Talk to your child before the conference. Find out which subjects your child likes and dislikes. Ask about any frustrations and ongoing issues in school or with their teacher(s) or other students.
- Review report cards, progress reports and any papers brought home from school.
- Write your questions and concerns down. It's easy to forget. Important topics include your child's academic and social skills and work habits.
- Don't leave the conference without mapping out a course of action. Document what was discussed.
- Talk with your child about what happened at the conference, including both the positive aspects and the areas that need improvement.
- Follow through. It will show your child and your child's teacher that you're serious about being involved.

Questions All Parents Should Ask:

- Does my child regularly complete the class work and homework you assign?
- Can I see samples of my child's work?
- Does my child participate in class discussions and activities?
- Does my child regularly attend class? Has s/he missed any classes?
- What are my child's strengths?
- Are there areas where my child needs improvement? If so, what suggestions/help can you or the school provide? How do I access this help?
- How involved should I be/what kind of help should I give my child with their homework?
- How do tests, attendance, homework, class participation, extra credit, etc. factor into my child's overall grade?
- Do teachers regularly work together to make sure the curriculum is coordinated within a grade and between grades?
- How do you make sure my child is learning what you're teaching?
- What's the best way to communicate with you about my child? (Office phone, cell phone, e-mail)
- May I verify my child's contact information/custody details?

If your child did not pass the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), make sure your child's school has created a plan to help your child.

Questions for Parents of High School Students:

Make sure you ask a few extra questions about the state's new high school graduation requirements, which begin with the class of 2008. Students must now pass a set number of classes, create a High School and Beyond Plan, complete a Culminating Project and earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement/Certificate of Individual Achievement by passing the WASL or a state-approved alternative. To learn more, visit www.k12.wa.us/gradrequirements.

- How does the school's curriculum incorporate the reading, writing and math skills my child needs to be successful on the WASL?
- What kind of classes should my child take after s/he passes the WASL?
- If my child didn't/doesn't pass the WASL ...
 - What help can s/he get? (Classes during school year, summer school, etc.)
 - When are retakes?