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# Teacher Tips for Successful Parent-Teacher Conferences

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Always begin with something positive about the child, then work your way into what needs to be improved upon.

*Janice Allen, Vincennes, IN*

To prepare myself and the parents for conferences, I send home a form with the conference invitation that asks the parents to write down their concerns and questions about their child or school policies, and return it to me before conferences. I also include a list of major topics we have covered and what I expect each child to be able to do. That way, parents can review what their child has done from papers sent home, and it won't be a surprise if their child isn't doing well. Then, I spend conference time working with parents on a plan to help their child. I

also keep work samples on hand for conferences.

*Shartene Hahl, Antioch, IL*

Don't talk down to parents. Be honest and truthful. Try to speak in the positive, not always negative. Offer positive ways to help a struggling child. Make at home ideas and games to be used by the parents to work with the child. LISTEN to what the parents have to say. Thank them for taking time to come and meet with you on the day of the conference.

*Connie Caldwell, Fort Wayne, IN*

As an administrator I encourage my staff to "Be Prepared". Send home brief questionnaires to parents asking them if they have a specific area or concern they wish to talk about. Have plenty of work samples, especially if you are going to talk about an area of weakness, PLUS, have some specific suggestions ready for the parent when they ask "What can I do to help?" Remember...you are the instructional expert.

*Ercell Cody, St. Charles, MO*

It is extremely important to start with a positive statement about the student and to point out any positive experiences that child has had to date. I think for a middle school student it is important to stress the need to write assignments down in an agenda book and not rely on memory for homework assignments. I like to make sure that, as the parent ends the conference, I review two or three main things the student must do to become an even better student and ask that the parent contact me in a couple of weeks to see if there has been an improvement.

*M. Lonchar, Waukegan, IL*

Simple things...I always include the student. After all, how can we work as a team if the key player is not there? I also make sure we are all sitting at a table in the same size chairs. It will keep everyone on the same level, both physically and psychologically. I make sure I know the parents' correct names, both first and last. In many cases, last names are different from the student's.

*Paula VanDerVeer, Fultonville, NY*

I include the child in the conference so he can proudly show his parents what he's done well.

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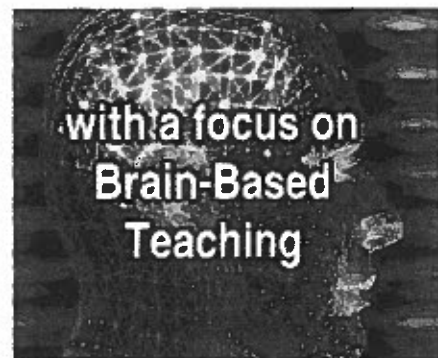
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Then we talk about areas to improve on, and together we make a home-school plan that everyone can buy into. The child is now aware that parents and teachers are talking the same language and there is more commitment on all sides. If I or the parent wish to converse in private, that is an option at the end of the conference.

*Sue Welch, Quincy, IL*

I take the "sandwich" approach. I start with something positive, continue with the things that the child needs to work on, and I finish with something positive. I also have his or her portfolio with me the day of the conference.

*Marcelle Tapia, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic*

I'm always careful about how I phrase comments to parents. It's very easy to say the wrong thing and make an enemy of the parent and child. That's the worse thing that a teacher can do.

*Mimi Weitz, Little Neck, NY*

I write notes on the child before the conference and put them into two categories; Glows and Grows. This helps me to stay focused on the child and their strengths and needs both academically and behaviorally.

*Melissa Alfonso, Lancaster, PA*

I communicate with the parent throughout the quarter so there are no surprises. WE agree upon a goal or two, with the child, in a get-acquainted meeting early in the schoolyear. I call, email, fax, write notes, invite parents in throughout the quarter. The twenty minute report card conference includes discussions of the goals and plans for the future. We often have "student led" conferences in which the student talks through his/her portfolio and report card. A goal for the next quarter is established.

*L. LaBarbera, Oak Park, IL*

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