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Parent-Teacher Conferences

Make the Most of Your Meeting

College concerns? Worried about grades? Routine chat? Parents and teachers meet for a variety of reasons throughout the school year. Whatever your reason for visiting, it's important to remember that you and your child's teachers are partners in helping your child in the transition to adulthood. The combined support of her teachers, counselor, and you will be essential to help your child get on the right track to achieve her goals.

Your Involvement in School

Being involved in your child's life at school is important. Obviously, you can't accompany him every step of the way, but it's important for him to know you're interested in what he's doing, and that his hard work is appreciated. Also, if you stay informed about your child's classes and activities, you'll be better able to give him help or guidance when he needs it.

Meet with your child's teachers for a brief chat at the beginning of the school year. A good relationship with his teachers will make it easier for you to work together if problems arise during the year. Your child's teacher can also help you understand what your child experiences every day, and inform you about his schoolwork and responsibilities.

Talk to Your Child Beforehand

Ask your child if she has any questions or concerns she'd like you to discuss with her teacher, and find out what she likes and dislikes about the class. Let your child know what you plan to talk about with the teacher -- when your child is involved in decisions about her education she is more likely to take responsibility for her work and performance.

Questions

Jot down any questions you may have before your meeting to make the most of your time with his teacher. Some questions you may want to ask:

- How has my child performed in your class so far this year?
- What skills and knowledge will my child be learning in your class?
- Will my child complete any major projects or term papers this year?
- How do you determine grades on assignments? How do you determine his overall grade for the class?
- If my child needs help, is tutoring available?
- If my child is a fast-learner how can you and the school make sure he is challenged?
- Is this a college-track class? How does this class help students build skills to succeed in college?
- What resources are available at school to help my child with your class?
- How can I help my child succeed in your class this year?
- What resources would help my child do his work better? Are there additional books or resources available at school or in the community that would help him?

Special Circumstances

Aside from any questions you have, it's also important to let your child's teacher know about your concerns or any special circumstances that might affect her work in school. Update her teachers or high school counselor if any major changes occur in your family. Some families are reluctant to reveal private matters, but you might consider simply alerting her counselor or teachers that your family is going through difficult times.

Keep an Open Mind

You may find the teacher has constructive criticism about your child. Keep an open mind to the teacher's comments. Neither your child nor his teacher is perfect, so if a problem arises it's important to consider both sides of the story. The best solution is one that helps your child succeed in school.

Follow-Up

Take notes during your meeting to record important points that were made. Let your child know what you discussed and if you and her teacher made any decisions or came to any conclusions. Set up another meeting with the teacher, if necessary, to monitor your child's progress or to discuss any continuing problems or concerns.

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