## Maximizing Parent-Teacher Meetings

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# 10 Tips to Make the Most of Your Parent-Teacher Meeting

Most parent-teacher conferences only last 10 or 15 minutes. That's not a lot of time to connect with your child's teacher. But with a little preparation and planning, you can make the most of this time. Here are 10 tips that can help.

What do you want to know?

What questions do you have about meeting with your child's teachers?

Before the Meeting

Three things to do before meeting with your child's teacher.

#### 1. Look Over the Schoolwork

- Take some time to look over your child's homework, essays, reading logs, and other schoolwork.
- You can also look over any emails or newsletter updates the teacher has sent.
- How does it look like your child is doing?
- Is the homework too easy or too hard?
- Does your child need help?
- Review report cards. What are your child's grades like?

#### 2. Talk With Your Child

#### How is it going?

Get a sense from your child about how school is going.

What's most and least enjoyable?



Ask your child if there's anything you should talk to the teacher about.

#### 2. Talk With Your Child

#### How do they feel?

Ask your child how they feel about their relationships with their teachers and their peers. Do they feel supported and welcomed in the classroom?

Is there anything they would like support with outside of schoolwork?

#### 3. Make a List of Questions



- Now that you've talked with your child and reviewed schoolwork, make a list of questions for the teacher.
- Once you have your list, put questions and concerns in order of importance, so you can cover the biggest things first.

#### 3. Make a List of Questions

▶ Think through anything you want to make sure the teacher knows.



- Are there specific things that helped your child thrive in school in the past?
- Have there been any big changes in your family or living situation?
- ▶ Are there holidays you'll be **away**?
- ► Talk with other family members to make sure you cover everything.

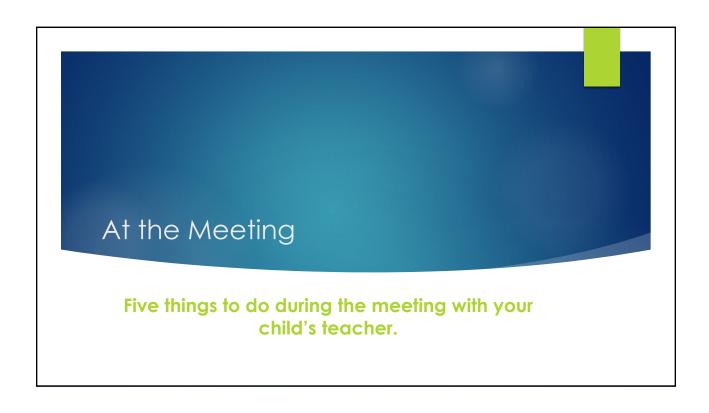
# Understood.org Template: Before and During the Conference

Here is a form to help you get your questions and thoughts organized from the website Understood.org.

#### Parent-teacher conference worksheet Before the conference, mark what you feel your child is doing well ( $\checkmark$ ) and what you think your child is having trouble with ( $\times$ ). During the conference, go through this worksheet with the teacher. Talk about each topic, and take notes on what you discuss. Student's name:\_ \_ Conference date: \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Teacher(s) in attendance: Area to discuss Notes/ways to help Understands assignments Finishes on time Turns in completed work Class participation Arrives prepared and on time Listens and follows directions Follows class rules Makes progress in key areas Knows when to ask for help Doesn't give up too easily Social/emotional Gets along with other students Gets along with the teacher Can handle frustration **Understood** Page 1 of 3 | © 2017 Understood for All, Inc.

#### Parent-teacher conference worksheet Review the questions below and add your own. Use the left-hand column to number the questions in order of importance. Start by asking the most important questions, since you may not have enough time for everything. Priority Questions to ask during the conference Notes What will my child be learning in the next two months? My child has some strengths and some challenges. Do you think my child has a good sense of what they are? How can we communicate more regularly? What can I do at home to reinforce what my child is learning in school? What kinds of standardized tests will my child take this year? Is my child getting any specific help with math or reading? Should I get a tutor for my child? Should I ask the school to evaluate my child? Should I talk to anyone else at school about my child's progress? When can I get an update on my child's progress? Understood Page 2 of 3 | © 2017 Understood for All, Inc.

Priority	Questions to ask during the conference	Notes	
If your c	hild has an IEP or a 504 plan:		
	Do you have a copy of my child's plan? Do you have any questions or concerns about it?		
	Is there anything <b>not</b> in the plan that would help my child have a better experience in your class?		
	Does my child need any new accommodations in class or on tests?		
Use this	space to write your own questions		



#### 4. Be on time.



- ▶ Double-check **the time** slot for your conference.
- ▶ Then plan to be ready about **five minutes before** your assigned time. This way, you won't miss any of your time with the teacher.
- ▶ Bring **an interpreter** with you or ask the school for one. Or use the app by Microsoft, Translator.



#### 5. Skip the class overview.

- ► Teachers often begin the conference with some general class information.
- If you already know this information, politely say: "If it's OK with you, can we spend more time on the questions I have about my child?"



#### 6. Stay calm.



- ► It's important to keep your emotions in check during the conference, even if your child is struggling with something.
- Taking a few deep breaths can help. Using a respectful tone will also help you and the teacher work together to find solutions for your child.
- At the same time, if you **disagree** with the teacher, be sure to **speak up**. If you don't say something, the teacher may assume you don't have concerns.

#### 7. Ask the most important questions first.

Try to cover your **most important** questions and concerns first.

Use your **list of questions** if you had time to make one.



But try not to worry if you don't get to everything.

You can still **ask for a follow-up meeting** with the teacher to discuss anything you couldn't get to

And if you don't understand something the teacher says, **ask for an explanation**.

#### 8. Figure out next steps.

## Save a few minutes at the end of the conference for next steps.

Depending on what you've talked about, here's what you might suggest:

- Staying in touch: "How can we keep talking about this? Could I get weekly feedback for the next month—maybe a quick email on Fridays?"
- In-class help: "We talked about giving my child more support in class. What should we look for in the coming weeks to decide if it's working or not?"
- School services: "I'd like to meet with the school to talk about extra reading instruction. What information should we gather before that meeting?"

# After the Meeting Two things to do after the meeting.

### 9. Update your child.



- ▶ Talk to your child about what happened.
- It's important to share anything positive that you and the teacher discussed.
- ▶ But it's also important not to shy away from problems or **challenges**.
- If there are next steps, make sure your child knows what they are.
- ▶ Do not get angry with your child if they are not doing well in school.

#### 10. Follow up.



- ► If you and the teacher agreed on next steps, follow up in the next week or so to see how things are working out.
- It's useful to have check-ins before the next conference.
- At each check-in, **ask for an update**.
- Also, be ready to share what you've been doing at home on any action steps.

#### NYC Department of Education Help

- Parent Teacher Conferences: Tips on what to expect during PTC
  - https://www.schools.nyc.gov/get-involved/families/parent-teacherconferences
- Learning Grade by Grade: Explore what and how students learn in every grade, at each school level.
  - https://www.schools.nyc.gov/learning/student-journey

Although parent-teacher conferences are short, they're a good time to learn more about your child's school experience.

What are some ideas you will try?

Any questions?

