



# PEN Notes: Fact Sheet #2

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## Productive Parent-Teachers Conferences

Oh no, a parent teacher conference!



I feel so intimidated at these conferences because I am afraid the teacher may be mad at me for speaking out and in turn reject me and my child. I am also afraid of being blamed for my child's problems. I also feel

intimidated and uncomfortable talking to a teacher because she is educated and knows more than I do. And besides, I am threatened by school staff. I don't always understand school lingo and I don't want to ask what it means. I might sound stupid!

In order for our children to succeed we must come to the table. Report cards don't tell the whole story of how our children are doing academically. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled to share things about our children and learn more about their strengths and weaknesses.

Remember parents and teachers are not on opposite sides of the fence, we all want the same thing—children who succeed in learning. Parents really do want their children to be in good schools and educators really want to provide those schools.

## A Parent-Teacher Conference Check List

### Before

- If the assigned time is convenient, sign the conference sheet. If not, reschedule. Keep the appointment—the teacher's time is very important.
- Talk with your child about their most and least favorite subject or any other concerns he/she might have.
- Make a checklist of things to discuss with the teacher in the order of importance, and stick to the list.
- Fill out your parent/teacher checklist before, during and after the conference.

### During

- Say something nice about the teacher or classroom.
- Ask if your child is adjusting and if he gets along with others



- Be a good listener and see what the teacher has to say.
- Be sure and ask what you can do to help your child.

- Does your child show any special interests or talents?
- Keep a positive attitude!
- Share the things you want the teacher to know about your child. Remember you are your child's first educator and you know your child best.
- Is your child working to capacity, at or below grade level? Ask to see samples of his work.
- Does your child participate in class?
- Know what the policy on homework, tests and quizzes as well as any long term assignments.
- Review your list and ask any questions you don't understand.
- Remember this is a process—don't expect perfection the first time. It's not the end of the world if you forget to ask a question or things don't go just as planned.

Listen to the information the teacher has about your child. She sees your child six hours a day and, let me tell you, these kids can be totally different at school than they are at home.



### After

1. Make notes to help you remember what was discussed at the conference.

2. Start a folder about your child:



- a. test scores
- b. report cards
- c. health records
- d. notes from the teacher
- e. samples of work

3. Make a calendar:

- a. mark next conference
- b. mark important events
- c. mark all parent meetings and social events

4. Write down the most important thing you learned from the conference! And write a follow-up note to the teacher as a way of cementing the relationship.



5. Report back to your child with enthusiasm and optimism. If he has been disruptive in school, for example, you might ask why he has so much energy in school or, "Mrs. Jones and I think you are really smart and we know you could work harder in school."

Parent/Teacher conferences are essential building blocks of home/school communication

A parent- teacher conference should be a conversation, not a monologue. After all, you are your child's first teacher and you have invested your lifetime in them. That teacher is very important, but will only be in your child's life for a short time.

## Questions Your Teacher May Want to Know About Your Child:

1. How does your child feel about school?
2. Any health problems?
3. How does the child accept responsibility at home?
4. What does your child do with his time out side of school?
5. What are your child's interests, hobbies.
6. What types of books does your child read at home?

### Conferences Are:

- A time for listening, sharing and reinforcing the idea of team work
- An opportunity for teachers to explain criteria and grades used on report cards
- Successful when a teacher and school system create a climate that invites collaboration with parents



**Teachers need the help of parents to do the best job possible of educating every child. Parents provide important perspectives and information that can be extremely important and valuable to the teacher. The teacher can in turn help parents play an active role in education at home.**