

# 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 any 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 4<sup>th</sup>- or 7<sup>th</sup>-grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), make sure a student learning plan has been created. These individualized plans should detail how your school plans to help your child get up to grade level. Schools should have plans in place right now for students in grades 5-10. (Starting with the class of 2008, student learning plans will be required for students who don't pass the 10<sup>th</sup>-grade WASL.) \*\*

## **Questions for Parents of 9<sup>th</sup>- and 10<sup>th</sup>-graders:**

If you have a child in the class of 2008 or beyond, make sure you ask a few extra questions about how the state's new high school graduation requirements will be implemented and if your child is on track to meet the new expectations. To learn more, visit [www.makehighschoolcount.com](http://www.makehighschoolcount.com).

- 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 doesn't pass the WASL ...
  - What kinds of classes are currently being offered to help students who are behind in learning the skills they need to be successful on the WASL?
  - What kind of summer school is being planned?
  - How will students access summer school? What is the plan for sign up?
  - What will be offered to help students during the school year?