

Parent-Teacher Meetings

Before the Meeting

- Recognize the purposes of parent-teacher meetings:
 - To establish common ground between the parents and teacher
 - To create an opportunity for parents and teachers to communicate on a constructive level (rather than only once there is a problem)
 - To facilitate collaboration and teamwork in caring for the child
- If you feel nervous, remember that the parents likely do, too. As one principal said, “You think you’re nervous? It’s not even your child you’re talking about. The parents are just as nervous as you are because it’s their child and they’re the ones that are responsible.”
- Neither the teacher nor the parent is on trial. It’s a time of communicating and learning to see things from the parents’ perspective.
- Pray over the conferences—pray for wisdom, clear communication, and understanding.
- Consider an alternative to you sitting on one side of your desk and the parents on the other side. It can feel intimidating to parents who feel like they are a student again, and the desk can feel like a barrier. Place their chairs to the side of your desk or sit around a table.

During the Meeting

- Always begin with a positive comment (encouragement, something the child is doing well, a way they contribute well to the classroom, etc.)
- There is value to discussing “small issues” too. Don’t wait until something is a big problem to bring it up. It’s easier to deal with something early and in a non-threatening way. You could say, “This isn’t a big deal, but it could become a big deal if we let it go. I started to notice this student has this problem. What can I do about it? What can you do about it? What works at home in dealing with this sort of problem?”
- There should be no surprises. If Beth is struggling in math, her parents should already be aware of this through prior communication. Do not assume they have figured it out.
- Aim to spend at least as much time listening as you do talking. Parents need to feel heard. Also, they are the expert on their child, and you can learn from them.
- Remember that parents do want to know how their child is actually doing. It is hard to tell them of difficulties, but it is important. Present problems in a helpful and supportive manner, not accusing or blaming the parents.
- Talk about all aspects of the child’s person—academic, social, spiritual, and personal growth.
- Ask questions. Prepare your questions beforehand. Here are some examples:
 - What does Billy say about school?
 - Is there anything about school that has been particularly stressful for him? How can I help?
 - What are areas you’d like to see him grow in right now?

- Is there anything you want me as a teacher to know about your child?
- How much time does your child spend on homework each night? How do you feel about this amount of homework?
 - Due to time constraints, some teachers prefer to ask some of these questions in the form of a paper survey the parents can fill in and submit later. See the following example: <https://thedockforlearning.org/document/classroom-survey-for-parent-teacher-fellowship/>
- Read this article for one seasoned teacher's step-by-step description of how she runs a parent-teacher meeting: <https://thedockforlearning.org/parent-teacher-conferences-part-two/>

Sources

You Are Not on Trial: How Parent-Teacher Events Can Strengthen Your Teaching by Victor Ebersole [You Are Not on Trial: How Parent-Teacher Events Can Strengthen Your Teaching - The Dock for Learning](#)

Parent-Teacher Conferences by Arlene Birt [Parent-Teacher Conferences, Part One - The Dock for Learning](#)
[Parent-Teacher Conferences, Part Two - The Dock for Learning](#)