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Parent-Teacher Meetings – take along your child’s photo

and other tips for the next parent-teacher meeting

Don’t laugh – I know a mother who was delighted to hear the teacher make some wonderful comments about her child. The teacher finished with “Jamie is a lovely girl.” The disappointed parent replied “But Jamie is my son.” Teachers in high school often have two hundred different students to remember, so don’t be embarrassed if you need to jog their memory. Of course primary school teachers have no trouble remembering the children with whom they spend the entire school day.

What is the purpose of a parent-teacher meeting?

The meeting provides an opportunity for the teacher to share what they know about your child in the school setting, and for you to share what you know about your child and your child’s thoughts and feelings about school. It is hoped that any insights gained will enable both the teacher and you to help your child to achieve his or her potential as a student.

The meeting should provide and seek information that is not contained in the written progress report. If the teacher just presents marks and results that you already know, the meeting can be a waste of time. Likewise, if you just ask questions without offering the teacher any insights into your child, the meeting will not be as useful.

To prepare for the meeting

Review the written progress report with your child to check your understanding of your child’s progress in each subject. Talk to your child about what they like and dislike about school, the subjects in which they feel they are performing well or poorly, and their

relationships with their teachers and classmates. Ask if there is something specific they want you to talk to the teacher about. You can jot down some notes and questions that you want to ask the teacher, and add your own thoughts about their habits, interests and commitments within the household and other out-of-school activities that might help the teacher. Reassure your child that you are attending the meeting for their benefit.

You expect the teacher to know your child fairly well in the school setting, so add these learning behaviours to your list to ask for feedback if they have not been addressed in the written report:

- Effort
- Co-operation
- Completion of tasks
- Participation
- Calmness
- Relationship with classmates
- Motivation
- Concentration
- Presentation of work
- Confidence
- Willingness to ask for help

If your child is having problems at school, try not to get upset during the meeting. Stay focussed on talking about strategies that will help your child at school and at home. If the meeting is not long enough, arrange to meet again or to stay in touch by phone or email. It is important that your relationship with the teacher is positive.



If your child finds the work too hard, ask what extra support can be provided at school and if you need to seek outside assistance.

If your child is bored at school because the work is too easy, ask if and how the program can be modified to make it more interesting and challenging.

If your child does not like the teacher, keep in mind that it is the teacher's job to move your child outside their comfort zone regularly in the pursuit of new knowledge and skills. A child probably does not like the doctor who sticks a needle in them either. Use the meeting to clear the air, based on the comments

your child has made to you. Listen to the teacher's side of the story.

If you are unsure about the homework policy, ask how you can know on a daily or weekly basis what your child is required to do.

At the end of the meeting, make sure you thank the teacher for helping your child and for being available for the meeting (they do not get paid overtime). Make time to discuss the meeting with your child at a time when you will both be calm, and follow up any suggestions that you think might help them.