

## How to prepare for a Parent-Teacher Conference

**What is a Parent-Teacher Conference?** A Parent-Teacher Conference (PTC) is a meeting with the teacher and parents to discuss your child's academic progress. You may request a conference with the teacher anytime in regards to your child. The school may schedule at least one PTC per school year. Most schools have two per school year. For Sacramento City Unified School District, the parent-teacher conferences are usually held toward the end of each semester. Your child's teacher will go over the report card at the PTC and give you time to ask questions. There are no parent-teacher conferences for middle and high schools. However, you may still request one at anytime if you feel you need one.

**Why is a Parent-Teacher Conference important?** The purpose of the PTC is to share information that will help your child's teacher do the best possible job of planning and teaching. It is a time for both the parent and the teacher to examine the student's work together. The teacher can demonstrate materials or suggest ways the parent can help with the child at home. To make the best use of your short time with the teacher, prepare by taking some notes before the conference. Think about your child's strengths and weaknesses, study and learning habits, classmates and homework. Take your notes to the conference.

**What does my child need? What do I want?** Parents should always keep in mind that their goal is to find ways to make school and learning positive experiences for their child. By thinking positively and staying calm throughout the meeting, they have a much greater opportunity for achieving the desired results.

### **Before the conference:**

1. Decide whether or not you want to share any family problems that may affect your child's learning. Write down things it would be helpful for the teacher to know, such as: any unusual stress at home, your child's relationship with brothers, sisters, and others at home, what he likes to do for free time at home, organized activities in which your child participates, your perception of your child as a learner and as a person, previous school experiences, if you think it would be helpful.
2. Talk with your child before you go. Ask what he/she likes about school, what he/she dislikes or would like changed. What are his/her feelings about the teacher or the class environment? If your child is old enough, ask your child what he/she thinks you should talk about, this may be a clue to preventing problems.
3. Write down your questions in priority order in case time is short. Be specific. How much homework will my child have? How are grades decided? What is the classroom discipline policy? What kinds of tests are given? What do they mean? What are my child's best and worst subjects? Is my child working up to his ability? Do you want to know how your child gets along with others? Do you want suggestions on friendships to be encouraged? Do you want to see samples of his/her work? Does the teacher keep a portfolio of work samples or a grade record book? Is your child completing tasks in about the same amount of time as the other student? Ask how can I help?
4. Write down questions you have about your child. How is my child doing in reading, math, and other subjects compared to her potential; compared to the norm at her grade level? How is my child doing socially? Does he get along with others? What does she/he like to do? What does she/he not like to do? Does he/she seem happy in school? Are there any problems?
5. Include questions you have about why things are done a certain way. What happens to the homework after it is handed in? How does a child move into a different reading group, etc.?
6. Whenever possible, both parents/guardians should attend.
7. You have the **right** to have an interpreter at the conference. However, if you need one, remember to ask in advance. Tell your teacher your work schedule. If you have limited time off from work, tell your teacher in advance so that she/he may schedule it at your convenience.

### **During the conference:**

- Listen carefully. If you do not understand something, ask to have it explained.
- Take notes during the conference so you can remember what was said.
- Ask the questions you brought, and any others you wrote down during the conference.
- If there are any problems, brainstorm ways to work on them together as a parent and teacher team; decide on specific ways to help at home, and on types of praise and reinforcement you will both use.

### **After the conference:**

Share what occurred at the conference with your child by: stressing the positive points brought out by the teacher, giving praise for achievement; discuss the areas of improvement and ways to improve.