

# Parent-Teacher Interview Guidelines for Teachers

Parent-Teacher Interviews are an opportunity to meet your students' parents and a great way to promote communication between school and home. They enable both the teacher and the parents to work together toward their student's learning and social wellbeing.

The objective of parent-teacher interviews are to:

- involve the parents in the educational process
- document the student's progress for the parents
- reflect on learning outcomes and goals
- give parents the opportunity to express feelings, questions and concerns, and
- establish ongoing communication networks between the teacher, parents and student.

## Before the parent-teacher interview

Teachers might like to organise the following materials in preparation for parent-teacher interviews:

- If your school allows it, notify the parents prior to the interview time and encourage them to bring their child along to the interview. This helps to foster a three-way relationship of trust, and give students more accountability for their academic and social growth. If needed, private discussions can be conducted in the last five to ten minutes of the interview.
- Revisit personal notes and recent student reports to help you outline key points you wish to cover in depth with the parents.
- Make a note of any specific questions you would like to discuss and do not be afraid to ask them.
- Know and be able to explain school programs, policies and report procedures
- Prepare a running sheet to help you cover all major points and to stay on topic. Include learning areas such as:
  - work habits
  - daily performance
  - class and activity participation
  - socialisation.
- Have specific examples of the student's work to show parents when reporting on a student's strengths or weaknesses.
- Try to focus on an equal amount of the student's strengths and weaknesses.
- Establish a friendly setting. Interviews should be conducted in a comfortable and informal atmosphere.

## During the parent-teacher interview

Here are some helpful guidelines for conducting parent-teacher interviews:

- Assure parents that parent-teacher interviews are entirely confidential
- Never be rude
- You only have a limited time so try to keep small talk to a minimum
- Be relaxed and open during the interview
- Show active listening skills
- Maintain positive body language
- Try not to use jargon words. Use plain English wherever possible. Avoid professional and psychological terms
- Use inclusive and non-biased language
- If you are going to take notes during the interview, remember to use a new piece of paper so parents do not see what you have written about other students
- Always be specific and offer examples when talking about the student's progress, both academically and socially
- Spend some time showing parents their child's work
- Encourage parents to actively contribute to the conversation. Ask them if they have any concerns or questions about the student's report or anything that you may not have covered
- Let parents know how their child participates in classroom activities – are they shy or confident?
- Stay focused on the child whose parents you are meeting with
- Don't get caught up in tangent discussions or arguments
- Do not talk about other students or teachers
- Do not rise to angry parents but do be firm
- If there is conflict, suggest a second conference. Don't allow a digressive interview to turn into an argument
- If there are no real concerns, then perhaps spend the interview setting further goals with the parent for the student. If the student is present, then this would be an ideal time to praise them for their work and allow them to participate in setting goals for themselves
- Be effective with your time management. If you have not covered everything you had hoped to during the allocated time or the parents have more questions, schedule another time to speak further
- If there are concerns you felt you could not bring up or ran out of time, then you should set up another time to meet with the parents
- Let parents know that they can contact you throughout the year if they would like to discuss something or to follow up on parent-teacher interviews. Remember to stipulate that they must call the school and make an appointment to see you, and
- End the interview on a positive note.

Here are some questions you may wish to ask the parents:

- Are you concerned about any particular area of learning?
- Does your child seem happy about school?
- How does your child get on with others?
- Is there anything you think I should know about the child or about something that may be happening at home?

Be prepared for questions. Some common questions asked by parents during interviews are:

- Do you have any concerns about my child?
- Do you have problems with my child in class?
- Does my child participate in class discussions and activities?
- Does my child easily join in on the playground?
- Does my child focus on set tasks?
- Does my child satisfactorily complete their homework?
- Does my child complete their work on time?
- Does my child easily cooperate and follow the rules and routines of the classroom?
- What activities does my child enjoy?
- What is my child reluctant to do?
- What goals should my child be aiming for?
- What can I do to support my child's development at school?

## **Problem parent-teacher interviews**

If you believe that you may encounter some difficulties with certain parents, then you should ask your principal or another teacher for added support. Below is some advice to help you cope with problematic parent-teacher interviews:

- Try to have a support person with you. If this is not possible, try to hold the interview near another teacher's or the principal's office
- Suggest having a three-way discussion with the principal at another time.
- Show that you are actively listening to their complaint and are willing to work through the problem with them
- Do not react defensively or lose your nerve
- Try not yell
- Keep your voice low and speak at your usual pace
- Use 'I' statements. Do not verbally attack the parent, and
- Keep the focus on the student.

## **After parent-teacher interviews you should aim to:**

- record significant discussion points
- list any conclusions or suggestions given, and
- make a note of any information that may help you teach the student more effectively.

## **Unexpected parent-teacher interviews**

Occasionally, worried parents or teachers may schedule additional meetings between parent-teacher interviews if they have concerns. In these instances, it is essential that everyone remains calm and tries to work through the issue that has arisen. As well as following the above guidelines, you might also like to:

- Try to discover the nature of the problem before the interview
- Prepare for the interview as best you can. Look over any notes you have that may assist you with the meeting
- Be informed about school policy and procedures
- Ensure privacy and confidentiality
- Be professional: stay focused on the specific topic

- Make sure all parties fully understand the problem
- Offer suggestions and encourage the parents to do the same
- Develop follow-up suggestions together
- Create specific activities to help improve weaknesses and difficulties, and
- Try to end the meeting positively.

### **Other links:**

DEECD: [Getting the most out of parent-teacher interviews guide](#)

DEECD: [Parent-teacher interviews](#)