



FACT SHEET – PARENT-TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Teachers and parents who work together with mutual respect, caring and support... will enable children and youth to achieve more at school

What are parent-teacher interviews?

Parent-teacher interviews are short face-to-face sessions between you and your child's teacher, often only 10-15 minutes, usually after each reporting period. Specific hours and days are set aside for these interviews, but you are welcome to arrange a meeting with your child's teacher at any time during the school year.

This is an opportunity to find out how your child is getting along in school, in the classroom and /or in the playground; it is also the teacher's chance to learn more about your child and report on your child's progress.

How are they set up?

Schools usually send a notice home with information on scheduling interviews. Interviews may be held in the teacher's classroom, or may take place in the library, gym or other space within the school. If you are not available at the times put aside for the interviews, talk to your child's teacher (or call the office) so that other arrangements can be made.

It is helpful if you are on time and keep to your allotted time so that others can meet at their scheduled time. If you need more time to discuss a concern, a further meeting can be scheduled.

Parents, teachers, principals, or special education personnel may also ask to meet at different times during the year depending on what is needed to best support your child.

Why are parent-teacher interviews important?

By attending the interview, you show your child that you value and are interested in his/her learning and school experience. Interviews provide parents with an opportunity to identify additional ways you can support your child effectively.

Before the interview:

Teachers: In elementary and middle schools, the teacher will often bring sample work and grades for individual assignments. In secondary schools grades for individual assignments will usually be on hand.

Parents: It is really helpful to prepare by spending time in advance thinking about what you want to know about your child's performance at school. Writing your questions down will help you get the most out of your interview. *(Some sample questions at the bottom of the next page)*

Talk to your child before the interview. Find out what he or she enjoys most about school and if your child has any worries or concerns to address with the teacher. Does your child seem happy about school? *What is their favourite part of the day? What is the best thing that happened to them? What makes them sad?* These are open-ended questions that will allow your child to answer more than *yes* or *no*.

Consider what special things you would like the teacher to know about your child. Does your child have any special interests or hobbies? This may be helpful for the teacher to know when trying to spark your child's interest. Has anything important happened that may be useful for the teacher to know about? This information will remain confidential. Families have insight that will help the school better support learning.

If you need a translator to fully communicate, please arrange this with the school ahead of time.

During the interview:

- Be clear about what you want out of the interview at the beginning. For example: *"Thank you for Meeting with me. I would like to discuss my daughter's progress in math."*
- Use your list of questions to make sure you haven't left anything out.
- Don't hesitate to make notes while the teacher is talking so that you will remember what he or she said once you get home.
- If there is a particular troubling concern you may need to develop an action plan together.
- Listen carefully; be open to other points of view; you both want the best for your child. It is difficult to stay focused on your child if either of you is defensive.
- Ask the teacher about the classroom rules, homework, and student expectations.
- Ask about your child's work habits, behaviour, participation, and learning style.
- Highlight your child's strengths. We all have weaknesses, but we build from our strengths.

After the interview:

- End the interview on a positive note and keep in regular contact with the teacher to follow-up on the mutually agreed plan.
- Most children are aware of these interviews and may be anxious about them – as soon as possible you should talk to your child about what was discussed and how you and the teacher will work together to support his or her learning.
- Stay involved in the life of the school and classroom to better support your child.

Sample Questions

- *How is your child getting along with other children?*
- *What are the children working on right now in class?*
- *Is there anything the teacher feels your child needs extra help or practice with at home?*
- *How are grades determined/ how will your child be evaluated?*
- *What will you cover in this grade or subject area this year?*
- *Are you concerned about any particular area of learning for my child?*
- *What are your expectations for homework? Has my child missed any assignments?*
- *How are my child's work habits? Is the time in class spent well?*
- *Does my child read at the level you would expect for this grade?*
- *Is my child able to do the math you would expect for a student in this grade?*
- *Is my child in different groups for different subjects? Why?*
- *Has my child missed any classes other than the ones I contacted the school about?*
- *Does my child come prepared for class (e.g., arrives with pen, paper/ notebook, etc)?*
- *Does my child qualify for any special programs or additional supports (e.g., gifted, learning disabilities, English as a Second Language)?*
- *Does my child get along well with the other students in the class? What is his/ her attitude towards school, peers and adults?*
- *What can I do at home to help my child be more successful at school?*
- *Can you explain school terminology/ methods for instruction? (e.g., schools have so many different programs which may be confusing, for example DEAR – stands for Drop Everything And Read Time – developed as a fun way to put more emphasis and importance on reading. Don't be afraid to ask what something means)*
- *How do I inform the school about my child's allergies?*

Please note...***don't be fooled by protests from your child that, "Nobody's parents go to Parent Teacher Interviews!" In fact, most parents do attend - and students are pleased that their parents are interested, even if they'll never admit it."***

If you have other helpful hints to add to this Fact Sheet, please don't hesitate to let me know. It is a work in progress...