

Tips for Talking With Teachers

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Whether your grandchild is the class genius, the class clown, or the class bully (or somewhere in between) it is helpful to review some tips and suggested questions for talking with teachers. We assume that both of you—the grandparent and the teacher—want what is best for your grandchild and that you will work together to benefit the child.

Tips for a Successful Parent/Teacher Conference

1. Ask your grandchild if there is anything that he/she would like you to discuss with the teacher.
2. Jot down everything that you want to talk about at the conference.
3. Arrive promptly or a few minutes early.
4. Begin with positive comments about the teacher or classroom.
5. Avoid lengthy discussions of topics that are not related to the purpose of the conference.
6. Be open-minded to suggestions from the teacher.
7. Keep your emotions under control.
8. Take notes about what has been discussed to share with your grandchild.
9. Express appreciation for the conference.
10. Do not stay beyond your allotted time.

Suggested Questions to Ask at Parent/Teacher Conferences

1. What skills and knowledge will my grandchild be expected to master this year?
 - What will my grandchild learn this year in key subjects like math, science, and English?
 - How do you inform students about the academic standards they're expected to meet?
 - What kind of projects and assignments have you planned that will help my grandchild meet higher academic standards?
2. How will my grandchild be evaluated?
 - What kind of information do you use to evaluate students?

- How do you know if they're academically ready to move on to the next grade?
 - How are grades determined in your classroom?
3. What can I do to stay more involved in my grandchild's academic progress?
 - What can I do at home to complement what is happening in the classroom?
 - How can I know on a daily basis what homework has been assigned?
 - How can I support teachers' efforts in implementing higher academic standards?



4. How do you accommodate differences in learning?
 - What if my grandchild is a slow learner and falls behind?
 - What if my grandchild is a fast learner and is bored?
 - Are summer school, tutoring, or other programs available for students who need more help?
5. How are older students prepared for further learning after high school?
 - Are children encouraged to think about a wide variety of career interests?
 - Are all students encouraged to take algebra by the end of eighth grade?
 - Who is responsible for the academic advisement of my grandchild?

Concerned About Child Socially at School

Questions for the teacher:

1. Does my grandchild have any friends at school?
 - Why do you feel my grandchild is having problems socializing with other children?
 - Is there anything you can do in the classroom to help my grandchild feel more comfortable around her peers?
 - Do you have any suggestions about what I could do at home to help my grandchild get along better with her classmates?
 - Would it be a good idea for my grandchild to talk to the school counselor or psychologist about ways to improve his/her socialization skills?



Tips for the Grandparent:

1. Try to make your home a friendly place that attracts children.
2. Invite a classmate to your home to play with your grandchild.
3. Have your grandchild participate in programs that bolster his/her interests and give him/her new skills (sports, music, 4-H) and friends.
4. Let your grandchild see you in social interactions so that he/she will have an appropriate role model.
5. Children with friends at school are generally better off than those without; however,

solid relationships with family members, neighborhood children, and other adults are good substitutes.

If a Teacher Calls You on the Phone:

1. **Make time to talk.** If you can't give the teacher your full attention, ask if he/she could call back another time or if you could call him/her back at a more convenient time.
2. **Take notes.** The unexpected phone call along with the other stresses often make it difficult to remember everything that was talked about on a phone conference call. It will be easier to remember the suggestions from the teacher if you write them down.
3. **Do not interrupt.** Be sure you let the teacher fully explain the reason for the call before you comment.
4. **Share your thoughts and ideas.** You know your grandchild better than the teacher, offer suggestions and strategies to help the situation.
5. **Do not expect a quick fix.** If there was a quick fix, the teacher would have already done it and there would not be the need for the phone call. Take time to think about the concern of the teacher and talk with your grandchild about the issue. You may need to have a face to face conference with the teacher.
6. **Do not place blame.** Try not to get defensive. The conversation is to help your grandchild, not blame anyone for the situation. The teacher needs your support to help resolve the situation.

References

Family Education Network, <http://school.familyeducation.com>

National Education Association, <http://www.nea.org>

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