

Scottsdale *Unified* School District

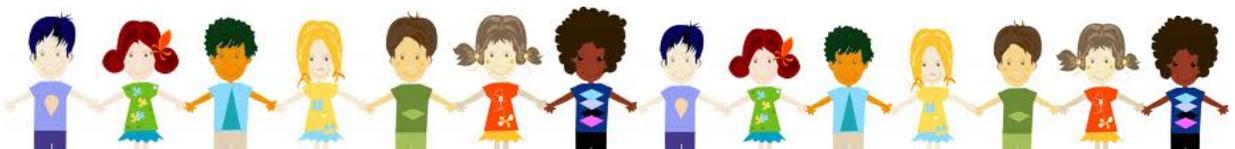
## *From the Desk of Your School Psychologist*

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences: A quick guide for parents**

Parents and teachers share a common goal- and that is helping students learn and feel successful. Research literature shows that when parents and teachers work collaboratively, everyone benefits. However, the road to collaboration is not always easy. Working to create an effective teacher/parent partnership requires efforts from all participants and is always a work in progress. Each teacher/parent conference can be viewed as an opportunity to start a cooperative partnership. Here are some tips to get ready for your upcoming conference.

- ***Talk with your child before the conference.*** Children should understand why the conference is taking place (is it due to a problem or is it a routine meeting held for all parents) and be assured that parents are seeking ways to help and learn about what their children are doing in school. Find out if your child has any specific concerns about schoolwork or relationships with classmates.
- ***Be familiar with your child's homework assignments.*** If your child has homework be familiar with the assignments and how your child has been performing. Is the work getting done? Does your child seem to understand the assignments? Does the work seem too easy or too difficult?
- ***Prepare a list of questions you want to ask your child's teacher.*** Is my child meeting expectations for learning and behavior? How has my child performed on daily class assignments, on tests, on homework assignments? How does my child compare to others in basic skills? Does my child follow school rules or does my child exhibit any behavior problems? If my child is struggling in any area, what has been tried to improve performance? Does my child pay attention in class? What else can be done at home or at school? What are my child's strengths? Are there any concerns about my child's health, or adjustment? Are there materials or resources that you would recommend? How does my child get along with other students?
- ***Be ready to collaborate.*** Generally, teachers will give parents bad news because they want to help the child do better and not to place blame on the parent or child. But sometimes the message does not come across that way, and parents naturally become defensive and protective, maybe even angry. Assume the teacher has your child's best interests in mind, and respond calmly and tactfully. Indicate that you are most concerned with solving the problem and helping your child succeed. Offer to meet further to discuss the problem and to work out a solution. Remember that teachers are often as afraid to deliver bad news as parents are to hear it.

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## Tips for during the Conference

- ***Listen carefully.*** It is perfectly acceptable to take notes. This is particularly helpful if one parent or other involved relative cannot attend. It can also help you remember details so that you can ask questions later.
- ***Offer your perspective.*** Many times teachers will ask you about your child's activities at home and your views of your child's strengths and areas where help might be needed. Even if the teacher does not ask, speak up and provide your observations and any concerns.
- ***You want to hear good news about your child.*** If the teacher does not offer any positive comments, ask directly, "What does my child do well?" And remember that teachers often hear only negative comments, too. Be sure to try to offer a compliment, a thank you to let the teacher know you appreciate what they are trying to do to help your child—even when what the teacher is trying to do may not be working.
- ***Do not be afraid to ask questions.*** If you do not understand something or feel your concerns are not being addressed, then ask the teacher. Teachers and other educators easily slip into jargon and forget that many parents are not familiar with the terms they use every day. Ask what test scores mean and what the results mean for your child. Stop and ask for explanation of unfamiliar terms or programs. Not understanding can quickly lead to misunderstanding.

Canter, A. (2004). "Home-School Conferences - A Guide for Parents", NASP. Retrieved from [http://www.nasponline.org/resources/home\\_school/ptconf.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/home_school/ptconf.aspx).

