



## Parent-Teacher Communication – A Plan for the School Year

Teachers, parents, and students all strive for a successful school year. Essential to making this happen is the communication between parents and their child's teacher. This series shares a plan for effective parent-teacher communication over the course of an entire school year. We will look at what to do for back-to-school, conferences, preventing mid-year meltdowns, and ending the school year strong.

### Part 1: Getting the Year Started

Below are tips on parent-teacher communication to get this year off to a great start and keep it strong throughout the year.

**Meet and Greet** – If you have a concern bring a letter to the teacher on the Meet and Greet Day. Include information about your family and child that the teacher may find helpful (i.e., your child's strengths, interests, and areas needing support). Share what you feel is important and necessary. Keep an optimistic tone to your letter. Know that your student may behave differently with his/her teacher so avoid sharing too much negative information to prevent any negative expectations in the teacher's mind. At the end of the letter, let the teacher know you look forward to talking with him/her in a couple weeks. Waiting a couple weeks to follow up will give the teacher time to get to know your child and how he/she performs in the classroom.

**Establish Means of Communication Early** – Ask the teacher how he/she prefers to be contacted. Knowing this information will ensure easier, more efficient communication throughout the school year.

**Join the Parent Teacher Association (PTA)** – Being a part of PTA provides the opportunity to give your input into decisions which affect your child's education.

Now that you feel ready for those first days of school, our next segment of the series will focus on September's Back-to-School Night.

### Part 2: Back-to-School Night

Building a partnership from the beginning with your child's teacher will help to ensure your child's success continues for the entire year. Back-to-School Night is a time to learn about the curriculum and expectations for the coming school year and what you and your child can do to keep this year strong.

- Ask your child what he/she would like you to share with the teacher or any questions to ask.
- Examples of questions to ask:
  - What skills and knowledge will my child be expected to master this school year? How are students informed of these expectations?
  - How are students evaluated? How are grades determined?
  - What can I do at home to support my child's academic progress?
  - How are differences in learning accommodated in the classroom?
  - How will I be informed of my child's progress?
- Take notes during the meeting and keep all handouts on important items discussed. You will be able to reference these materials throughout the school year when questions arise.

After Back-to-School Night you should have a clear understanding of the coming school year's academics and expectations. Our next segment will look at how to make the most of October's Parent-Teacher Conferences.

### Part 3: Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are a time to learn about your child's progress at school and making a plan to keep that progress strong. This segment in our parent-teacher communication series looks at helpful tips to make the most of fall parent-teacher conferences.

#### **Before Conference Day:**

- Be sure to fill out the teacher's form sent home for conferences. Include any areas you would like to discuss during your meeting.

#### **Conference Day:**

- Arrive promptly or a few minutes early.
- Have specific questions ready and make sure you have emailed these to the teacher in advance.
- Ask for work samples to illustrate the teacher's comments.
- Stay focused on written questions and comments. Take notes during the meeting.
- Be open-minded to teacher's suggestions.
- For any issues, come to an agreement with the teacher on a plan. Be sure you understand what the student and teacher will be responsible for as well as your responsibilities in implementing the strategies at home.
- Do not stay beyond your allotted meeting time to respect the teacher's schedule as well as those parents meeting after you.

#### **After the Conference:**

- Look over notes taken during the meeting. If you have any further questions, contact the teacher.
- Follow through on any strategies agreed upon during the conference to help your child. Be consistent!

Wondering how to keep this progress going strong even after winter break? Stay tuned for our next segment on preventing those mid-year meltdowns.

## Part 4: Preventing the Mid-Year Meltdown

After the winter break, many students and parents may begin to let those important school habits slide. Homework may not get written in agendas. Projects and tests may begin to sneak up on you. Use these helpful suggestions to stay in the loop during the middle of the year to prevent any mid-year meltdowns!

**Be Proactive** – Contact your child’s teacher to discuss ways to keep your child on track for the rest of the school year. If you begin to see any problems, contact the teacher as soon as possible.

**What about a Spring Conference?** - Some parents may find a need to meet with the teacher again in the spring. If you would like to schedule a time, please contact the teacher and let her know what you would like to discuss at the meeting. Sharing the meeting’s purpose or topic with the teacher ahead of time allows him/her to be prepared with grades, work samples, copies of academic content needed for explanations, etc. in order to make the meeting as helpful and productive as possible.

**Volunteer** – If you have not done so already, sign up to volunteer at your child’s school. Volunteering provides enormous support for your child’s school and also keeps you connected to the teachers, staff, and students. What you do depends on your availability, interests, and the needs of the school. Ask where you could be of best service.

Spring is on its way and those last weeks of school are around the corner. Look out for our last segment in this series on Parent-Teacher Communication for suggestions to end the year strong.

## Part 5: Ending the Year STRONG!

Another school year has come and gone, but before you start packing suitcases for that summer vacation look at some ways to make the most of those last few days of school.

**Create a Summer Plan** – Contact your child’s teacher to discuss ways to keep your child on track over the summer. Find out if there are particular academic areas you should focus on to best prepare for the next grade. Ask about any resources which have helped other students (i.e., websites, tutoring programs, reading lists, libraries).

**Ideas for Next Year** – Talk to your child’s teacher about strategies and suggestions he/she thinks next year’s teacher should know. What worked in the classroom to help your child succeed? Are there any areas your child needed extra support in over the course of the year? This is especially helpful if you are transitioning to a new school for the next year.

**Thank You** – Be sure to thank your child’s teacher and others at the school that helped make this year such a success for your child.