

# A Parent's Guide To Conferences with Teachers & School Administrators

Meeting with teachers or school administrators, either by phone or in person, is an important way to support your child's educational progress. You are your child's first and most important teacher; when your child enters school, other adults become involved, but you continue to have a central role. When parents and teachers work together, they can provide the child with best possible environment to achieve success.

## SEVEN TIPS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF PARENT CONFERENCES

1. **BE PRO-ACTIVE** – Don't wait until there is a problem. Contact your child's teacher(s) early in the school year to schedule a meeting. Discuss your child's strengths and challenges. Share what has worked for your child in previous classes. Ask if you can check in periodically by email or phone to see how things are going. Remember that you and the teachers have the same goal – both of you want your child to learn and do well.
2. **BE PREPARED** – Review your child's work, grades and progress reports. Talk with your child about progress in school and any problems. Make a list of questions to ask during the conference. If you have concerns about your child's progress, consider asking the staff to schedule diagnostic tests; if you make this request, the school must follow through. Be ready to describe ways you are supporting learning at home, and identify additional strategies you are willing to try. When teachers see your commitment, they will try even harder to help your child succeed.
3. **BRING SOMEONE WITH YOU** – It may help to have the support of a friend, relative or advocate at the meeting. Ask that person to take notes and pose questions. NHC NAACP Parents' Council may be able to provide assistance in getting an advocate if you have unresolved issues.
4. **BE POSITIVE** – The reason for parent/teacher meetings is to build a working relationship. State that you know the teacher also wants your child to do well. Focus on strengths and areas for improvement and how you and the teacher can work together to overcome any obstacles to your child's progress.
5. **BE PATIENT AND POLITE** – Stay calm and stick to the point of the conference. You should be firm and direct in what you hope to accomplish. Avoid being angry. You want the best possible education for your child, but making the staff defensive may cause them to dismiss your concerns. Solving problems takes time, and parents and school officials don't always agree. If you know there is an issue where there is disagreement, be prepared to present your concerns and listen to what the school officials have to say. If the meeting seems to be getting out of hand, ask for a recess to collect your thoughts. Remember, anything you say could be used against you and your child.
6. **DOCUMENT** – You may want to take notes (a friend or advocate at the meeting could do this) or at least write down what happened after the meeting. Keep copies of all documents as well as notes on calls and other developments.
7. **FOLLOW-UP** – Ask the teacher/school official to notify you (preferably in writing) of any actions taken as a result of the meeting. If you don't hear from them within a reasonable amount of time, contact them and ask what is being done.

Prepared by the New Hanover County NAACP Parents' Council

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