

How to Prepare for a Parent-Teacher Conference When You Have Concerns

A parent-teacher conference is more useful when you arrive with a short list of specific concerns instead of trying to cover everything at once. Before the meeting, review recent grades, assignments, teacher messages, and any examples your child has mentioned. Ask your child what feels easy, confusing, or frustrating. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends asking teachers for specific examples, how often a concern occurs, and whether it is an isolated event or a pattern.¹ Write down two or three questions you most need answered. The U.S. Department of Education describes family engagement as a partnership that supports student success and provides families with sample questions to strengthen conversations with schools.² During the conference, begin with a shared goal: understanding what is happening and what will help next. Ask what the teacher sees across time, what your child is doing well, what data or work samples show, what has already been tried, and which one or two actions would matter most now. If you hear something unexpected, listen first and ask for examples before reaching a conclusion. IES describes Academic Parent-Teacher Teams as a model that uses student progress data to make family-teacher conversations more transparent and collaborative.³ End by agreeing on a small plan, who will do what, and a date to review progress. A brief follow-up message after the conference can confirm the plan and reduce misunderstandings.

Did You Know?

- ✓ The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends asking for concrete examples, frequency, and patterns when discussing a school concern.¹
- ✓ The U.S. Department of Education provides parent questions designed to help families build stronger partnerships with schools.²
- ✓ IES describes Academic Parent-Teacher Teams as a way for teachers and families to use student progress data and home strategies together.³

Research Sources

1. American Academy of Pediatrics, HealthyChildren.org. "Dealing with Problems at School: How to Talk With Your Child's Teacher."
2. U.S. Department of Education. "Family Partnership and Engagement." Reviewed February 26, 2026.
3. Institute of Education Sciences. "What Are Academic Parent-Teacher Teams?" February 2024.

Parent-Teacher Conference Concern Planner

Use this page to keep the meeting focused on evidence, one or two priorities, and a clear follow-up plan.

Child's name: _____ Date: _____

Teacher/course: _____ Conference time: _____

1. Clarify the Concern - About 2 Minutes

Write the main concern in one sentence before the meeting.

Main concern: _____

2. Bring One or Two Examples - About 2 Minutes

Choose recent work, grades, messages, or situations that show the concern.

Evidence I will bring: _____

3. Ask for the Teacher's Pattern - About 3 Minutes

Ask what the teacher sees, how often it occurs, and what is already working.

Teacher sees: _____

4. Agree on a Small Plan - About 2 Minutes

Choose one or two actions for school and home rather than changing everything.

Our next step: _____

5. Set the Follow-Up - About 1 Minute

Choose when and how you will check whether the plan is helping.

Review date/method: _____

What Parents Can Say: "I want us to look at the same information and agree on one next step we can check together."