

Asking the School for Help Before Problems Escalate

Parents do not need to wait for a crisis, a failing grade, or a disciplinary meeting before contacting the school. Early communication gives the family and school more time to understand the pattern and try a reasonable support. Prepare before you call or write. Name one concern, give two or three specific examples, and explain how the problem affects learning, attendance, behavior, or well-being. Avoid guessing about motives. Facts make it easier for the school to respond. Use a partnership opening: “I would like to understand what you are seeing and work together on a next step.” Ask for specifics: When does the problem happen? How often? What happens before and after it? What has already been tried?¹ Share relevant information from home without turning the meeting into a full family history. A change in sleep, health, housing, family routine, or a recent stressful event may help the school understand what the child is carrying. End with a small written plan. Identify what the school will try, what the family will try, how progress will be measured, and the date for follow-up. If more expertise is needed, ask about the counselor, nurse, psychologist, special education team, or other support staff. Parent engagement means families and school staff work together to support learning, development, and health.² The U.S. Department of Education also identifies family-school partnership as important for student success.³ Clear communication is coordinated problem-solving, not complaining.

Did You Know?

- ✓ The American Academy of Pediatrics advises addressing school problems early, asking for specific examples, and agreeing on how progress will be reviewed.¹
- ✓ The CDC defines parent engagement as parents and school staff working together to support children’s learning, development, and health.²
- ✓ The U.S. Department of Education provides family-engagement resources to support productive conversations and stronger partnerships with schools.³

Research Sources

- [1. American Academy of Pediatrics. “Dealing with Problems at School: How to Talk With Your Child’s Teacher.” HealthyChildren.org. Updated July 19, 2023.](#)
- [2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Parent Engagement in Schools.” November 22, 2024.](#)
- [3. U.S. Department of Education. “Family Partnership and Engagement.” Page reviewed February 26, 2026.](#)

Ten-Minute School Support Conversation Planner

Use this page before contacting the school. The goal is to describe one concern, ask useful questions, and leave with a clear follow-up plan.

Child's name: _____ Date: _____

School concern: _____ School contact: _____

1. State One Concern - About 2 Minutes

Write the concern in one factual sentence.

My concern: _____

2. Add Specific Examples - About 2 Minutes

List two recent examples with dates or situations.

Example 1: _____ Example 2: _____

3. Prepare Three Questions - About 2 Minutes

Ask when, how often, what happens before or after, and what has been tried.

My most important question: _____

4. Build a Shared Next Step - About 2 Minutes

Record one action for school and one action for home.

School will: _____ Family will: _____

5. Confirm Follow-Up - About 2 Minutes

Choose what progress will look like and when you will review it.

We will look for: _____

Follow-up date and method: _____