

When Parents and Teachers See Two Different Sides of the Same Child

A child can look very different at home and at school. That does not automatically mean that a parent or teacher is missing the truth. The settings place different demands on the child: task length, noise, peer interaction, transitions, adult attention, structure, time of day, and fatigue may all change what adults observe. When a school concern appears, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends asking for specific examples, how often the behavior occurs, how adults and other students respond, and whether it is an isolated event or a pattern.¹ One reason multiple settings matter is that formal evaluations often gather information from more than one environment. For example, CDC guidance on ADHD diagnosis notes that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends asking parents, teachers, and other caregivers about behavior at home, school, and with peers. This does not mean that a child who behaves differently has ADHD. It shows why one setting alone may not tell the whole story.² Compare the conditions instead of arguing about which adult is right. Ask: What task was happening? What came just before the behavior? What did the child do? What happened next? When does the child do better? Then choose one small support to test and a date to compare results. The goal is a shared picture of the child and the conditions that help the child learn. The U.S. Department of Education emphasizes family-school partnership as a support for student success.³

Did You Know?

- ✓ The American Academy of Pediatrics advises parents to ask teachers for specific examples, frequency, responses, and whether a concern is a pattern.¹
- ✓ CDC guidance illustrates the value of observations from different settings by noting that parents, teachers, and other adults
 may all contribute information during an ADHD evaluation.²
- ✓ The U.S. Department of Education states that family engagement can have a positive impact
 on students, educators, schools, and communities.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. "Diagnosing ADHD." June 1, 2026.](#)
- [3. U.S. Department of Education. "Family Partnership and Engagement." Reviewed February 26, 2026.](#)

Ten-Minute Home-School Pattern Comparison

Use this page to compare one behavior across home and school. The goal is to find conditions that may explain the difference and choose one shared support to test.

Child's name: _____ Date: _____

Home concern: _____

School concern: _____

1. Define the Same Behavior - About 2 Minutes

Describe one observable behavior so both adults are discussing the same thing.

Behavior: _____

Example: _____

2. Record the Home Pattern - About 2 Minutes

Note the setting, demand, time, and what seems to help at home.

Home pattern: _____

3. Record the School Pattern - About 2 Minutes

Use the teacher's specific observations rather than assumptions.

School pattern: _____

4. Compare the Conditions - About 2 Minutes

Identify one important difference in task, timing, structure, attention, peers, or support.

Key difference: _____

What is similar: _____

5. Choose One Shared Test - About 2 Minutes

Agree on one small support to try and a date to compare what happens.

Next action: _____