

## Talking with Your Child's Teacher – 5 Tips for Success

**Author: Shannon Kalisher, MA – Child Works, LLC**

Your child will have numerous teachers over the course of his/her school career. Effective communication between parents and teachers helps facilitate success for child. Below are five useful tips in establishing a valuable relationship with your child's teacher.

1. **Introduce yourself to your child's teacher within the first month of school.** Introducing yourself to the teacher will help establish a positive rapport. It also affirms for your child that you are interested in staying abreast of his/her time spent at school. It is preferable to do this introduction face to face, perhaps at "back to school night" or during an open house, but you can also do so in an email, phone call or written note.
2. **Keep in contact with the teacher throughout the school year.** It is common mistake to wait until parent-teacher conferences to discuss any questions and/or concerns. Since most schools only have these conferences twice per year, many parents are not privy to their child's specific achievements and/or needs within the classroom. Occasional notes, emails or phone messages are powerful tools in monitoring your child's progress and do not require much time for parents or teachers. This continual dialogue not only informs you and the teacher but your child will benefit greatly from this partnership.
3. **Always make an appointment to speak with your child's teacher about important issues.** Before and after school are very busy times for teachers. Trying to "catch" the teacher during these times will not result in a thoughtful,

informative discussion regarding your concerns. Scheduling a 10-minute conference either over the phone or in person will allow the teacher to prepare and give your questions his/her full attention.

4. **Come prepared to the meeting.** Write down any questions or concerns you may have as they come up. This will ensure nothing is forgotten and lets the teacher know that you take the meeting seriously. Come prepared with any ideas that may help facilitate the discussion such as important tidbits about your child (interests, strengths, areas of need, what s/he responds to, etc.), information from previous teachers, and relevant details about your home-life.
5. **Work together to find solutions.** Be careful not to rely on the teacher to come up with the entire plan of action. A good teacher wants to work collaboratively with parents. If you are unhappy with the results of a conversation or meeting do not hesitate to give your feelings a voice, first to the teacher and, if necessary, the school Principal.

When parents and teachers work together, they provide the child with the strong foundation necessary for academic and social success. You may not “love” every teacher your child has during his/her student career, however, if you keep the above points in mind, you will be able to communicate effectively and advocate for your child when necessary.