

# Effective Parent-Teacher Conferences

## ***The 5-Minute Car-Ride Conference Preparation***

*Use your time on the way to the conference to prepare yourself:*

1. What major issues do you want to discuss?
2. What major issues do you think the teachers will want to discuss?
3. What questions do you want to ask? Who will ask them?
4. What outcomes would make you happy?

## ***Creating an Effective Conference***

*There are some things you can do to make sure that the conference goes well:*

- ❖ Identify how much time is available for the conference. This lets teachers know that you recognize they have limited time to meet. Make sure you cover everything you wanted.
- ❖ Come in with positive things to report about the student. Seek positive things from teacher if not offered. What is the child doing well in the class?
- ❖ Build a relationship with the teachers. Teachers are often afraid that parents are going to dump on them or ask them to do a lot more than is reasonable. Try to find ways to build a positive relationship where you can work together.
- ❖ Focus the conversation on what can be done to support the student. Keep it positive and non-threatening.
- ❖ Identify the concerns you want teachers to address at the conference. Ask for the teacher's concerns.
- ❖ Teachers may want to review grades, but it is more important to discuss the reasons why a student is successful or struggling. What can be changed to help the student be more successful? Ask the teacher to use strategies that you know are effective with the student.
- ❖ Try to raise the teacher's expectations for your child. Share what you know he or she is capable of doing. "We expect no less than..." If the student is not meeting these expectations, what should the teacher do? Contact parent and mentor? What else?

## ***Other Helpful Suggestions:***

- Does the teacher have help sessions? Can the teacher work with the student in afterschool? How should help sessions be scheduled and initiated? If the student will have a hard time remembering to attend, who will make sure they are there?
- Clarify what parents can do at home. How reasonable are the teacher's expectations for homework and out of class projects?
- How open is the teacher to having a visitor in the class? Observing may tell you a lot about what's going on.
- Where is the student sitting in the class? Are they isolated? Engaged? In a place where they can focus?
- How many black or Latino students are in the class? Does the student have a positive peer group in the class?