

## Tips for Successful Parent-Teacher Conferences

Throughout the school year, parents/guardians have the opportunity to meet with their child's classroom teacher. Some of these opportunities will be casual, while others will be more formal such as those following the distribution of report cards (e.g. Parent/Teacher Interview Night). In order for the conferences to be valuable, it is important that parents understand that these are opportunities to give and receive information about their child.

### Why are parent teacher conferences important?

- Conferences give you a chance to get to know your child's teacher, learn about the program your child will be studying (the curriculum) and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your child with the person who will be helping him/her to learn this year.

### As a parent, what should you do to prepare for a parent-teacher conference?

- Talk to your child beforehand. Have a good understanding of the expectations of the teacher, the curriculum, homework assignments and any issues that you should raise with the teacher.
- Be prepared to share specific examples if you have concerns about any aspect of the classroom or program.
- Share approaches that have worked for you when dealing with your child that the teacher might find useful.

### What can you expect to learn in a parent-teacher conference?

Although all conferences will be different since they are about individual students, most conferences will give you information related to:

- Your child's progress to date in the required courses
- Recent test results and what they mean
- Your child's strengths, needs and next steps in school

### Helpful Hints for Conferences:

- If possible, both parents/guardians should attend the conference.
- Be on time. Most conferences will be held on evenings when teachers are meeting with parents back-to-back. When one parent is delayed, it backs up the meetings of all other parents and creates more pressure for the teacher.

### Recommendations For Follow-up Interactions:

- Follow-up with the teacher if there are areas discussed during the conference that require further action. If it is a matter of concern or real distress, **it is always best to meet with the teacher directly at another date/time. Email is not as suitable for this type of interaction as it can leave room for misunderstanding.**
- If you feel your child's progress warrants a discussion with the principal or vice-principal, either call ahead to plan a meeting on parent's night or schedule a follow up meeting at another time.
- If using email for ongoing communication, please be mindful of: (1) the classroom environment and the complexity of the teacher's day. If you don't get an answer the same day, it does not mean you are being ignored. (2) If the goal is to merely share a piece of information or giving the teacher some lead time to think about an issue you'd like to discuss, an e-mail is probably appropriate. If the goal, however, is to have two-way communication and meaningful dialogue, e-mail is perhaps not best. A telephone conversation or a face-to-face meeting is a better way to provide clarity and develop a plan for your child's continued success.

**It is important to note that the intent of all communication is to reflect a positive tone and set the stage for cordial working relationships between all school community stakeholders. (With contributions from the National School Public Relations Association and the YRDSB Respectful Workplace and Learning Environment Policy).**