

Parent/Teacher Conference

These tips are brought to you by Mr. Joseph Tweed, Director of Admissions Ranney School.

1. Create a Partnership

If you have heeded the advice of countless educators you began the school year reaching out to your child's teacher and established an open line of communication from day one. The partnership is essential in helping your child achieve success. Teachers want each student to reach their potential. No one knows the child better than the parent. Establishing a partnership early helps the teacher know that it is a team effort. Listening carefully to the teacher's suggestions about what will help your child find success sets a clear tone that you are in this together. The partnership when done well then makes the first conference something to look forward to.

2. Stay Positive

Parents are emotionally invested in their children. This passion and emotion can at times make it difficult to communicate with both child and teacher. Teachers try to be objective and want nothing more than to help each child achieve his or her full potential. In order for this to happen, it means teachers have the difficult task of delivering both good and at times less than favorable news. Stay positive and calm, listen carefully to the advice they offer.

3. Involve your Child

One recommendation is to try to involve your child in the process when possible and appropriate. For the elementary school student engage him or her in the process of your preparation for the conference. Ask your child to share with you work he or she is proud of and perhaps a piece that could have been prepared for more carefully. Opening this dialogue shows your student that you value self assessment and you build an open relationship that will be internalized as safe and supportive.

4. Come Prepared to Ask Questions

Teachers come to every conference with a plan they prepare so they can share a wealth of information about your child during the allotted time. Prior to the

conference prepare questions and create your own plan. Share information with the teacher about what you observe at home. How does your child approach homework? Where does he or she study? What information is shared with you about school? Prepare some questions for the teacher. Here are a few possible questions. How does my child approach learning in your classroom? Have you noticed my child taking a special interest in a topic? How do you think my child learns best? How can I support what you are doing in the classroom? All this preparation will help the conference to be productive and positive.

5. *When the Conversation Becomes Difficult.*

Let's be honest not every conference is easy. Tough questions arise, teachers deliver results that may come as a surprise and at times children may not be achieving at the level you as parents and we as educators expect. When these difficult conversations come roaring around the corner: BREATHE. Your child's teacher does have his or her best interest in mind.

Nearly every challenging conversation produces positive solutions that move students forward. If you have followed the above steps, listened carefully and you believe in partnerships these difficult conversations will more closely resemble small hurdles that your child will learn to jump over while making significant and measurable progress. Remember, try not to be on the attack or this is how you fix it. Use your time to build the partnership, advocate for your child and develop strategies and goals that lead to outcomes of growth, maturity and a love of learning.

Parent/Teacher Conferences are simply fantastic opportunities to learn, to evaluate and to grow. So as you make that appointment with mild trepidation take a moment to look at your son or daughter and reflect on all the progress made and all the work he or she has put into becoming an artist, scholar, athlete, actor and budding leader.

Cherish each one of those conference days. Too soon from this day your child will head off to college and you will no longer be present on conference day.