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Making the Most of Your Parent-Teacher Conference

The first parent-teacher conference of the school year provides a great opportunity for you and your child's teacher to share insights and information about him. At this meeting, you can develop a relationship with the teacher and present yourself as a team player in your child's education. If your child has a learning disability and receives special education services, it's essential that you make the most of the conference with the general education teacher. **Because most teachers schedule 30 minutes or less for each conference, planning ahead can help you maximize the experience.**

The Planning Process

You may have met with your child's teacher when the school year began. By the time the conference rolls around, several weeks will have passed; this means you, your child, and his teacher should all have a better sense of your child's struggles and strengths. How can you organize your comments and concerns? Here are factors to consider:

Gather Information

Ideally, you'll start preparing during the first few weeks of the school year. What should you pay attention to?

- **Ask the teacher to give you information** about the planned curriculum, how she assigns and evaluates work, and what her teaching philosophy is.
- **Check your child's school work.** What is the teacher assigning? Review your child's completed and corrected work. Try to do this even if he does homework with a tutor or caregiver.
- **Look for patterns in your child's school work.** What subjects (such as math or reading) seem difficult? Are certain tasks (such as writing or computing math problems) more difficult than others? Jot down examples of:
 - ongoing (carryover) problems from your child's previous school years.
 - any new struggles you see emerging.
 - improvement in areas that used to be difficult.
- **Listen to what your child says about his school work**, as well as his relationships with his teacher and classmates. Kids with learning disabilities often have trouble expressing themselves clearly, so be patient and help him explain both his positive experiences and his struggles. Ask him what he thinks are the most important points to cover at the conference. Doing this will help you see things from his perspective.
- **Note any classroom accommodations and techniques previous teachers have used** to help your child succeed.

Organize and Prioritize

From the list of concerns and observations you create:

- ▼ **Select the most important points** to discuss with the teacher.
- ▲ **Prioritize your concerns** so you'll be sure to cover the most critical topics before "your time is up" at the conference.
- ▼ **Summarize your top concerns on paper** to take with you to the conference. Try using our "[Parent-Teacher Conference Planning](#)" form

Find Out Who Gives Feedback

At least a week before the conference, ask the teacher if feedback from other educators will be

