



Washoe County School District
Parent Involvement Council
Parent Involvement Office
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Tips for Teachers and Administrators

Parent Teacher Conferences

Research has shown that parental involvement is essential to a student's success in school. One of the most important contacts between home and school is the Parent Teacher Conference. Learn how to make the most of the opportunity!

Administrators

Awareness

- Announce dates and times repeatedly – at family learning nights, back to school night, open houses, sporting events and assemblies.
- Publish the schedule in newsletters, on a bulletin board or on the school web site.
- Create a bulletin board in the school devoted to conferences with tips for parents.
- Provide conference information in a language that parents can understand.
- Discuss or include information on the goals of a parent teacher conference and the reasons parent attendance is essential.

Accessibility for Every Parent

- Allow flexible schedules that include early morning, late afternoon and evening conference times.
- Consider longer conference times such as 20 to 30 minute sessions.
- Arrange for school counselors, office staff or parent volunteers to telephone parents, reminding them of their appointments and encouraging them to attend.
- Talk to your Partners in Education or your parent organization (PTA, PTO, PFO) about providing childcare, transportation, and refreshments.
- Provide interpretation.
- Let parents know what services will be provided to help them overcome their barriers to attendance.

Prepare Teachers

- Provide an in-service on conducting successful conferences.
- Provide teachers with skills on developing positive relationships with parents in a variety of situations.
- Review district and school policies with teachers on parent involvement.

Maximize the Opportunity

- Discuss the Nevada State Educational Involvement Accord with teachers and staff so that they are aware of how to use it as a positive tool for home and school partnerships. For more tips on the Education Involvement Accord, visit



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- Ask parents to fill out a survey and collect data on parent's perceptions and needs to base future school site parent involvement decisions. Provide an box for completed surveys so that parents' can maintain their anonymity on the survey.

Teachers

Schedule Conferences and Notify Parents

- Send home personal letters to notify parents of conference dates. Highlight an agenda that will peak their interest and emphasize the importance of the conference on their child's education. Ask parents to RSVP.
- Remind students repeatedly of their scheduled time and encourage them to attend with their parents.
- Schedule conferences for students of siblings in the same school first and try to coordinate times with other teachers. Do everything possible to avoid scheduling siblings' conferences on different days or at extremely different times.
- Schedule the conferences according to student's needs. If you anticipate that a particular family may need more time, block out more conference time.
- Telephone parents who have not responded and encourage them to attend.
- Send home reminders more than once.
- Contact parents who do not attend and try to reschedule.

Maximize the Opportunity

- Let the parents know if childcare, transportation and/or interpretation will be available.
- Provide parents with information about your curriculum and classroom procedures before the conference date. Things to include: general areas of study, broad academic goals, standards, classroom rules and regulations. Invite them to ask questions about those materials during the conference.
- Provide parents with suggestions on how to make the conference productive and ask them to complete a conference planning sheet and bring it to the conference.

A Friendly Conference

- Create a comfortable and private space to meet with adult sized chairs.
- Sit on the same side of the table with parents, not across from them. Have the student sit between the parent and teacher. Make eye contact with both the student and parent. Talk directly to the student as well as the parents.
- Share data on student performance with parents in an easy to understand format. Selectively choose which data you think is most relevant and reserve the remaining data in case there are additional questions.
- Show samples of student work and discuss the student's progress in core academic subjects.
- If you ask a parent to support specific learning at home, provide them with practical suggestions and examples on how that learning can be supported. Ask them if they need help with access to materials.



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- Know what you will say and questions that you will ask. Cite specific examples when highlighting positives or expressing concerns. Try to anticipate parent reactions and be prepared to answer questions or concerns calmly and appropriately.
- Use the conference record to prepare if you need guidance.

More Suggestions

Once parents have arrived at the conference, make it clear that their involvement is vital to their child's educational success. Some tips to help get your conferences started in a positive manner:

- Dress professionally while remaining approachable (consider the socioeconomic status of the families you will be speaking with).
- Start conferences on time.
- Make it clear to parents that you like their child.
- Remain calm and positive.
- Be a good listener.
- Emphasize collaboration and cooperation.

The following is a suggested script:

- Welcome parents at the door and thank them for coming.
- Make them feel comfortable by talking informally about their child, sharing a story or asking about outside activities.
- Introduce the Nevada State Educational Involvement Accord and explain that is a guideline for creating a partnership between school and home to help the child succeed. Each person may sign the Accord if they choose to, and then provide a signed copy of the Accord to the parent after the conference.
- Start the academic conversation with a child's strengths.
- Discuss each subject area and show data on the student's progress. Also explain where the student is in relation to grade level.
- Discuss the student's behavior, work habits and social skills.
- Leave plenty of time to address parent's concerns. Invite parents to share their thoughts and suggestions about the student. Connect the family with resources and services if they request it.
- Set goals with the parents and a timeline to check back with them on the student's progress.
- End the conference on a positive note and review any promises made to the parents.
- Walk the parents to the door, thank them for coming and invite them to contact you regarding any future problems or concerns.
- Make notes of promises made and create a plan to follow through on those promises.