

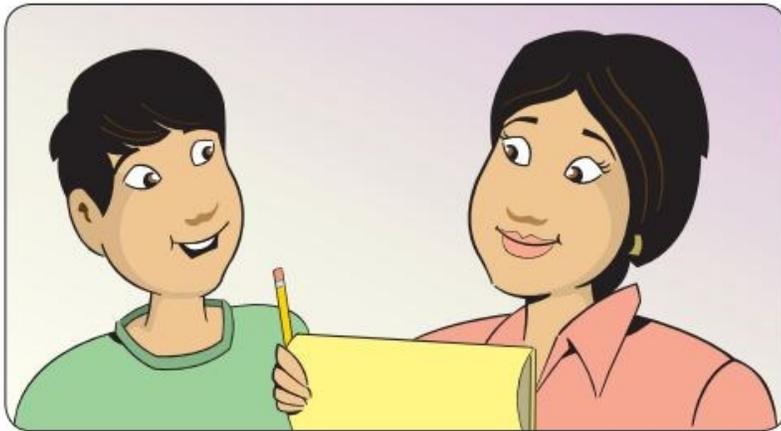
Practical Tips for Parents

St. Joseph School Counselor Department

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Parents make the difference!

Five Strategies for Productive Parent-Teacher Conferences



Some parents say that their parent-teacher conference is one of the most valuable things they attend all year. These one-on-one meetings are great for learning more about your child's strengths and weaknesses, and will give you a better idea about the year ahead. Here are five tips to help you get the most from your conference:

Talk to your children. Ask them to tell you what they think are their easiest and most difficult subjects—and why. Do they have any questions they would like you to ask their teacher?

Make a list of things the teachers need to know. You know your children better than anyone else. Sharing some of what you know with their teachers will make it easier to meet your children's needs.

Write down your questions. Ask things such as:

Is my child in different groups for different subjects?

Does my child participate in class discussions and activities?

Is my child working to his ability?

How well does my child get along with others?

Arrive on time. Teachers usually have many conferences scheduled during a single day. Arriving on time will allow you to take full advantage of the time the teacher has available.

Create an action plan. Ask the teacher what you can do at home to reinforce what your child is learning at school. Try to get at least one or two specific suggestions.

Perseverance Helps Your Children Succeed in School and in Life.

"These math problems are too hard," your child says while doing homework. Your response should always be the same: "Everything is hard until it gets easy." Ask your children to think about when they learned how to tie their shoes. That was hard. But then they figured it out and now it's easy.

School is filled with lots of hard things, from reading challenging books to learning how to do complicated math problems. Here are things to say and do when your children say something is too hard:

Let them know that you believe they can do it.

Remind them of other "hard" things that are now easy for them to do.

Break difficult tasks into smaller pieces. If reading the whole book seems too hard, try starting with just one or two chapters.

Help your children see the link between their effort and success.

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

—Maya Angelou

Research Reveals Discipline That Actually Works

Think about how your parents raised you. What discipline methods did they use? Research shows that even when parents don't agree with how they were disciplined as children, many use the same approaches themselves.

For example, adults who were yelled at as kids were more likely to yell as parents—even if they thought yelling didn't work, according to one study.

In order to discipline effectively, consider what you believe will work. Experts say certain methods work best. For example:

Acknowledge good behavior. What are the most important behaviors for your children to learn? When you see them, take notice. Say, "It's nice that you invited the new boy to sit with you at lunch. I bet that made him feel good."

Use consequences that are natural or logical. When your child does something inappropriate, choose a natural or logical response, if possible. A natural consequence of forgetting homework is getting a zero. A logical consequence of losing an item is having to replace it.

Plan ahead. Talk with your children about discipline. Why is it helpful? How does it work? After considering her ideas, list basic rules and consequences. Then follow through with consistency, fairness and respect.

Are You Showing Your Children How to Follow Directions?

Classrooms—and families—function better when children know how to follow directions. Are you teaching your children this vital skill? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

___ **1. Do you avoid** giving your children directions until you have their undivided attention? Do you look them in the eye and call them by name?

___ **2. Are you specific** with your instructions? If a job involves several steps, do you name them? "First, pick up your clothes. Then put your books

Q & A

Q: Getting three kids out the door in the morning is hard! One day, someone won't get up. Another day, somebody forgets a science book and has to go back for it. The result is that my kids usually miss the school bus and I end up driving them to school. What can I do?

A: Mornings are tough in many households. But as long as your kids know there's an easy out—you will drive them to school—they don't have much incentive to change.

Here's how you can begin to turn things around:

Call a family meeting. Announce that Mom's Taxi has a new policy. From now on, rides to school come with a cost. (You can choose the cost—perhaps it's part of their allowance, or perhaps it means some extra time spent on chores. It doesn't have to be a high cost, but it should be something your kids want to avoid.) Anyone who rides the "taxi" will have to pay the toll.

Help your kids get organized at night. Have them lay out clothes. Fill book bags. Pack lunches. And set alarm clocks to go off a few minutes earlier.

Give everyone a five-minute warning in the morning. Then calmly walk out the door and head for the bus stop. If a child comes racing along with one shoe on and the other in hand—well, figure you're giving the neighbors a chuckle.

Enforce consequences once you set them. Odds are, you'll only have to collect your "taxi fare" once or twice before everyone gets better organized.

on the shelf."

___ **3. Do you ask your children** to repeat what you said before they begin a task?

___ **4. Do you have a checklist** posted for things you do every day (getting ready for school, etc.)?

___ **5. Do you praise your children** when they follow directions correctly?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are teaching your children the skill of following directions. For each *no* answer, try that idea.