

# Conference tips that work

## Your only contact with some of your students' parents might be during conferences.

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*Here are some suggestions to help make your meetings with parents productive and successful:*

- Bridge communication gaps. Find out in advance if you need an interpreter for parents or guardians who are deaf or hard of hearing, or when there is a language barrier.
- Schedule wisely. Provide times when working parents can attend. Allow enough time for conferences and stay on schedule. If you are scheduling back-to-back conferences, give yourself a short breather between each.
- Get organized. Have your grades, test scores, student work samples, attendance records and a flexible agenda ready. Be ready to talk about student progress, strengths and goals, and to answer parents' questions about their student's ability and achievement.
- Open with a positive statement about the student's abilities, schoolwork or interests, and save at least one encouraging comment for the end.
- Stress collaboration. Let the parent know you want to work together in the best interest of the student. Hear parents out, even if they are upset or negative. Be open to flexibility on issues such as homework.
- Be specific. Give examples and practical suggestions, rather than talking in generalities. End with a summary of actions you and the parents will take.

### *Team up with parents:*

Encourage parents to:

- Make completion of homework a family expectation.
- Show interest in their student's classes by asking specific questions.
- Use question-and-answer sessions to help the student prepare for tests.

