Welcomes, Meet & Greets, and Conferences: Tips for Teachers

Families and schools are partners. You are working together to make sure that children are healthy, happy learners. Effective communication is important for building school-family partnerships because it gives you peace of mind and assures the child’s well being. There are many ways you can communicate throughout the year: email, phone calls, newsletters, curriculum nights, or short conversations during pick-up and drop-off. The opportunities listed below allow you the chance to get to know the child and their family, and share information.

Be considerate of families that are new to the community, come from another culture, or do not speak fluent English. They may feel overwhelmed by the idea of participating in a Meet & Greet or conference with their child’s teacher. Consider bilingual invitations, offer child care, or arrange for an interpreter to minimize language barriers and encourage family attendance.

Welcomes

A great way to start off the school year is to send home a welcome letter and/or a questionnaire about 3-4 weeks prior to the start of school. If you do not have some of your own already, check with your school/center, colleagues, or the internet. There are a lot of samples online. Families can provide you with important information and insight about their child. Gathering information will help you share important details with those who may be helping that child in the classroom. If your school does not provide an opportunity to send out welcome letters, perhaps you will have the chance to meet the child and their family during a Meet & Greet.

Meet & Greets

Meet & Greets can come in many forms and often happen before children enter school. Your school may have time set aside for you to talk directly with the family. Some Meet & Greets are as simple as children and their families finding the classroom, meeting the teacher, and finding their assigned cubby. Others are extensive as you going to each child’s house and personally meeting with the child and family. If the Meet & Greet allows you ample time to talk to the family, be prepared to ask as much as you can about the child. For instance, you might want to ask about:

- Important people in the child’s life
- Something new the child has recently learned
- Child’s likes and dislikes
- Child’s personality at home
- Child’s extra curricular activities
- Things that are a challenge for the child

The child’s family is there to get to know you, the classroom, and the school. Be sure to share as much information as you can. You might want to share information about:

- The daily schedule
- What the child will learn
- Things the child can work on at home
- Classroom supplies
- Volunteer opportunities
- School calendars and procedures

In addition, most schools already have important forms and information gathering materials they will want families to complete. They may also have a curriculum night or a back-to-school night to share the classroom curriculum and other pertinent school information. These are all excellent information gathering tools.
Conferences
Conferences typically happen after you have been in school for a few weeks or months. Conferences should be a dialogue. This should be a time for you and the child’s family to talk about their child’s progress and to share thoughts, observations, and goals. Conferences should not be a time of surprise. If the child is struggling in school, reach out to the family the moment you have the concern. The family should do the same. You can then use the conference as a place to discuss the child’s progress. During conferences, teachers and families typically discuss:

- The child’s work (may be in the form of a portfolio)
- Assessments or observations
- Emerging skills
- Strengths
- Socialization
- Ideas for home
- Previously communicated concerns

Remember, conference times are short and focused. If you need more than 15-20 minutes to address everything, consider setting up an additional time and let the family know the purpose for the meeting ahead of time.