

Title 1 Parent Involvement Monthly Newsletter

October 2009



Do you know the ABCs of parent-teacher conferences?

Children learn their ABCs when they start school. You can also use the ABCs to get the most out of your parent-teacher conference.

Here's how:

A Ask questions. Before the conference, jot down a list of questions you want the teacher to answer. Bring the list with you to the conference. Here are the kinds of questions you may want to ask:

- What skills will my child be expected to master this year?
- What will my child learn this year?
- What are my child's strengths and weaknesses?
- How does my child get along with other children in the class?
- How can I best help my child be a successful learner?

B Be honest. You know things about your child that can help the teacher help him learn more. So share what you know. She'll want to know his likes and dislikes. She'll also want to know if there are any problems or concerns. If a grandparent has just died or a family member has lost a job, your child may be worrying about those things in school.

C Cooperate. A teacher may share a concern about your child during the conference. If that happens, work with the teacher to come up with a plan to address it. You and the teacher both want what's best for your child. Decide what you'll do at home and how she'll help your child at school. Set a date to meet and review how the plan is working.

Renner *Reminders*

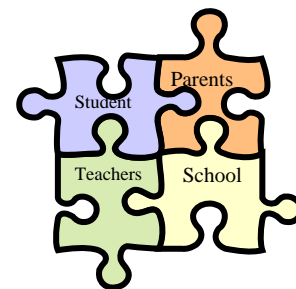
Remember the end of the first quarter is rapidly approaching, and all schools must have completed one parent meeting. The quarter ends on October 23.

This article on the front page may be useful for parents as they prepare for parent teacher conferences that take place the week of November 2nd. Please feel free to share with them.

Thank you for your timely completion of the parent involvement plans and compacts.

Have a good month!

Pat



Let students draw on their common sense

Self-reliance is a major part of responsibility. The student who wants you to walk her through every step, every time, is not taking any responsibility for her own learning.

Encourage students by giving them daily opportunities to rely on what you know they know, or what they can deduce if given a chance.

This common sense knowledge, is a great tool for gaining responsibility.

You can:

- Refuse to provide answers when you know students can come up with the answers themselves. Sometimes students just don't feel like doing the extra thinking. You are letting them off the hook if you do it for them. Instead, ask, "What do you think?"
- Be neutral. A student may supply certain answers just to see what your reaction will be. Even if your negative reaction causes the student to change the answer, you are the one who has been the impetus for the change. Make the student responsible for the change with a simple, "Hmm. Does that make sense to you?"
- Avoid playing traffic cop. There are certainly times when you need to direct a student's next move. But when you have offered them choices in advance, they must be self-directed. Say, "You decide" or "I know you can make a good decision here."

Reprinted with permission from the November 2009 issue of *Better Teaching*® (Elementary Edition) newsletter. Copyright © 2009 The Teacher Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc. Source: Merrill Harmin with Melanie Toth, *Inspiring Active Learning: A Complete Handbook for Today's Teachers*, ISBN: 1-4166-0155-4 (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, www.ascd.org).

Teach students six steps to keeping their cool

Managing frustration and anger is challenging for some students. Having a plan to deal with situations that arise can be tremendously helpful--for you, for a student having difficulty and for the entire class.

Experts in student discipline recommend using the following six-step plan:

1. Stop. Give students a strategy, such as taking deep breaths, to prevent the situation from escalating.
2. Think. Once students are calm, encourage them to think. "What was about to happen? Why?"
3. Decide. Have students decide how to proceed. "What should I do? Should I continue going down this path? Or should I turn myself around? What are the consequences of each choice?"
4. Create a backup plan. Make sure you also have a backup plan, such as having a safe place for students to go to calm down further.
5. Act. Students can try out an appropriate decision. Example: Avoid for the rest of the day someone who was name-calling and inciting anger.
6. Evaluate. Talk with students. Did the solution work? If not, what might be done differently if another problem crops up? Or better yet, how could the problem be avoided in the first place?

Reprinted with permission from the November 2009 issue of *Better Teaching*® (Elementary Edition) newsletter. Copyright © 2009 The Teacher Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc. Source: Brian D. Mendler et al., *Strategies for Successful Classroom Management: Helping Students Succeed Without Losing Your Dignity or Sanity*, ISBN: 978-1-4129-3784-9 (Corwin Press, www.corwinpress.com).

Find ways to connect boys with books

Scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress show that girls are generally better at reading than boys are. At age nine, girls score seven points higher than boys. By age 17, girls score 12 points higher.

Those differences show up at the college level, as well. Female students are generally better readers and writers than their male counterparts. Often, that's because they have spent more time reading.

So how can you get more boys to read? Here are some tips:

- Acknowledge that boys and girls often have different interests. Be sure books in your class library appeal to both boys and girls.
- Check resources like the Guys Read website (www.guysread.com) for books that have high interest for boys. If all else fails, "find some guys" and ask them what they like to read," says Jon Scieszka, creator of the website and author of *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*.
- Look for nonfiction--books on technology, biographies of sports heroes and books that explain how things work.
- Try humor. Joke books and books of riddles often appeal to boys.
- Don't avoid emotional content. Boys want to read about how other boys have dealt with emotional issues.

Reprinted with permission from the November 2009 issue of *Better Teaching*® (Elementary Edition) newsletter. Copyright © 2009 The Teacher Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc. Source: Mary Ann Zehr, "Authors Share Tips on How to Hook Boys on Books," *Education Week*, July 2, 2009 (Editorial Projects in Education, www.edweek.org).