



Ensuring Excellent Parent Teacher Conference Attendance

Parent teacher conferences are an excellent opportunity for teachers and parents to partner around raising student achievement. However, teachers often report challenges in getting families to come to conferences, particularly the families of students they really need to talk to. Families can face a myriad of challenges in coming to conferences, some that are certainly out of teachers’ control. Fortunately, there are a number of things teachers **can do** to improve parent-teacher conference attendance. Here are some strategies that teachers in D.C. have used to overcome challenges to parent teacher conference attendance.

Challenges	Possible Solutions
<p>My parents are working or have childcare issues during parent teacher conferences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share parent teacher conference dates in the beginning of the year and the expectation that all parents should attend. If parents know which dates to reserve, they may be able to make necessary arrangements to leave work or secure childcare in advance. • Offer alternative times for conferences, such as lunch, morning, or evening. By showing parents that you’re willing to be flexible and work around their schedules, you are signaling how important their partnership is to you and the students’ success.
<p>I know my parents are available on conference days, but they still don’t show up.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out a written invitation to each parent or guardian at least two weeks before each conference. Follow-up with a reminder phone call, text, or email close to the conference date. The day before, send each child home with a reminder sticker or flyer specifying the conference time. Personal invitations and outreach go a long way in making parents feel welcome and important. • Schedule a specific time for a conference with each parent. If parents work with you to set up a time that is convenient for them to talk about their child, they are more likely to show up for this conversation. • Ask families in advance what they want to discuss during conferences. Making conferences a two-way conversation where parents can discuss their questions and concerns can hook parents who feel like they never got useful information out of conferences before. (See the Preparing for Conferences Tip Sheet for ideas on how to do this)

Challenges	Possible Solutions
<p>My parents won't come to the school for a meeting.</p>	<p>Don't conduct the meeting at school. Try conducting the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At a community hub—fast food restaurant, coffee shop, church • Visit them at home • Over the phone
<p>Yeah, I tried everything. They still won't come.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to write personal invitations to their parents. • Offer an incentive to your class if you hit a certain parent teacher conference attendance target. (i.e. pizza for lunch if we get 75% or more of parents or families to conferences). • If they have siblings, team up with their teachers to see if you can conduct your student and siblings' meetings back-to-back. • Enlist other families or the community members to introduce you to the family member you need to talk to.