

# IDEAS FOR LEARNING & PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS FOR CREATING STRONG FAMILIES

March 2008

## PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

### Preparing For Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are right around the corner. Here are several questions you can ask the teacher to check on your child's progress. You might also use this time to find out how prepared she/he is for the next school year.

- Is my child working up to his/her ability?
- What are his/her best and worst subjects?
- How much does my youngster participate in class discussions and activities?
- How does he/she handle taking tests?
- Have you noticed any sudden changes in my child's behavior?
- What can I do at home to best help my child?

### Conference Tips

#### Before the conference:

- Talk to your child. Find out which subjects he or she likes the best and the least. Ask why. Ask if there is anything your child would like you to talk about with the teacher.
- Make a list of topics and questions. With only 15 to 20 minutes, it is easy to get sidetracked or forget what you want to talk about. Share pertinent information about your child's behavior, personality, concerns, habits and hobbies.

#### During the conference:

- Establish a rapport. Let the teacher know what you appreciate about his or her effects.
- Ask questions. The questions parents ask during the conference can help them express their hopes for the child's success.
- Address problems. Avoid angry or apologetic reactions. Ask what is being done about the problem and what strategies seem to help at school.
- Develop an action plan. Work with the teacher to develop a plan to address issues at home and at school. Come up with a way you and the teacher can stay in touch.

#### After the conference:

- Talk to your child about the conference. Make sure you stress the good things that were covered and be direct about the problems that were identified.
- If an action plan is created, tell your child about it. Watch your child's behavior and check homework. Ask your child how he/she feels about schoolwork. Stay in

touch with your child's teacher. Show appreciation to your child and the teacher when progress is made.

- A good way to keep a solid relationship with the teacher is to send a thank-you note or place a thank-you call after the conference. Keeping in touch with the teacher, regardless if your child is struggling or doing well, shows your child that education is a high priority.



*"Each Child is a Unique and Unrepeated Miracle"*

## MAKING SCHOOL A PRIORITY

With spring right around the corner, it can be hard to keep children focused on learning. What can you do to make school a top priority for your children? Keep these simple ideas in mind – they're useful at any time of the year.

**Make attendance job #1.** Let your youngsters know that unless they're sick, they must go to school. Try to schedule routine dentist and doctor appointments after school hours. If possible, take family vacations during school breaks. Tip: Give awards for perfect attendance each month. Try a "Job Well Done" certificate or a coupon good for a night of bowling or a movie.

**Show you care.** Want your children to know that you're interested in their learning? Talk about their school activities and projects. Attend as many school events as you can. If homework and after school activities conflict, speak up: "I know you have baseball practice this evening, but homework comes first. After you finish, I'll take you to practice."

**Keep it upbeat.** Try to set a positive example for your children, even when your own day has been difficult. Instead of saying, "I had a hard day at work. I'll never get my project done," try, "Work was hard today, but I made some progress on my project." If you show a positive attitude about your work, your youngsters may feel better about their own.

## ♥Reduce Test Anxiety

If your child worries about testing in school, you can help to soothe his or her anxiety. Stay informed about when tests will be given, and help your child prepare for them with good study habits. Be sure your child gets to bed on time the night before and has a nutritious breakfast on test morning. Encourage your child to do his or her best. At the same time, explain that nobody expects more than that! ♥

~ 10 Ways ~  
**BUSY PARENTS  
 CAN ENCOURAGE READING**



1. Place a variety of children's books and magazines in handy spots around your home. Urge your children to look through them often.
2. Bring books on family errands and trips – on the bus, in the car, to the doctor, to the store, to relatives' homes, etc.
3. Have your children read books to you while you prepare dinner or fold laundry.
4. Turn play dates into reading circles. Ask the children to read to each other, then discuss the story.
5. Go to the library regularly. Bring paperwork and pay your bills while your children look at books.
6. When you read the newspaper, have your children sit with you and read the comics or children's section.
7. Ask your children to read recipes to you as you cook, or instruction manuals as you assemble items.
8. Encourage your older children to read to their younger siblings.
9. Give your children books and magazine subscriptions as gifts.
10. Limit TV viewing to make time for reading. Even 15 minutes of reading before bedtime can improve your children's skills.

**REMEMBER ~**

**A love of reading leads to success. The more time your children spend reading, the better!**

**EVERYTHING IS BETTER**



**WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER**

**THE LONGEST MONTH**

Maybe March seems longer because it follows the shortest month. How do you beat those late-winter blahs and keep stress at bay? Take charge with five simple steps.

**Do a quarterly audit.** How's your health? Are you a quarter of the way toward the goals you made at New Year's? Have you had your annual checkup? Don't despair if you haven't. This is your chance to re-take control.

**Reinforce the positives.** Don't wait until year's end to reward yourself for meeting goals. If you're on track, get a massage. Plan a trip. Go shopping. You'll motivate yourself to keep up the good work.

**Make course corrections if needed.** If you're falling behind in any area, ask yourself why. Perhaps your goals weren't realistic, or unforeseen events stood in your way. Revise as needed, and pat yourself on the back for being honest.

**Ease the way.** Ensure victory by removing obstacles to success. If you're trying to lose weight, stay out of the snack aisle this month. Save money? Avoid impulse buying by only shopping when you have a list.

**Celebrate March.** Plan a mid-month get-together with friends or an evening out with your spouse or partner. Smile. It could be the month that makes all the difference in your life.

**FITNESS IS FUN FROM A TO Z**

- A** is for Active. Staying active helps you grow up strong and healthy.
- B** is for Bones. Exercise builds sturdy bones.
- C** is for Calories. Calories tell you how much energy is in food.
- D** is for Drink. Try to drink 6-8 glasses of water a day.
- E** is for Every Day. It's best to be active every day.
- F** is for Flexible. Stretching daily keeps your body flexible.
- G** is for Goals. Set activity goals so you can achieve fitness.
- H** is for Heart. Being active strengthens your heart.
- I** is for Injury Prevention. Wear safety gear to prevent injuries.
- J** is for Jumping Jacks. Simple activities like jumping jacks build fitness.
- K** is for Know. Knowing the right way to play and to move helps keep you from getting hurt.
- L** is for Lifestyle. Your lifestyle is the way you live. Make it healthy!
- M** is for Muscles. Exercise helps to build strong muscles.
- N** is for Nutrition. Eating healthful foods improves your fitness.
- O** is for Oxygen. You breathe harder when you exercise because your body needs more oxygen.
- P** is for Posture. Sitting and standing up straight give you good posture so your heart and lungs work better.
- Q** is for Quiz. Quizzes and tests exercise your mind.
- R** is for Rest. Rest and sleep re-energize your body.
- S** is for Safety in the Sun. Wear sunscreen, hats, and long sleeves to protect your skin from the sun.
- T** is for TV time. Keep fit by exercising during commercials.
- U** is for Upbeat. Being fit helps your stay upbeat and feel good about yourself.
- V** is for Variety. Make fitness fun by doing a variety of activities.
- W** is for Warm Up and Cool Down. Start out activities slowly to warm up your muscles. Afterwards, walk slowly to cool down.
- X** is for eXample. Set a good example for others about fitness.
- Y** is for Your Future. Fitness can help make your future brighter.
- Z** is for Zest. To have zest is to be excited about life. Fitness adds zest!

