

Ed Extras

Helpful information about learning brought to you by Reading Rockets, Colorin Colorado, and LD OnLine

When to Call Your Child's Teacher

It used to be that parents and teachers had set days and times for parent-teacher conferences, and communication outside the conference was rare. Thanks to e-mail, school websites and social networking sites, parents and teachers can communicate with each other more easily and frequently. Despite that, some parents are still reluctant to contact their child's teacher. Don't be! A quick conversation or e-mail exchange can solve simple misunderstandings, or make it clear that a longer, more formal conversation is needed.

Be sure to call your child's teacher if:

- You notice a change in your child's attitude toward school. A child who used to love going to school who now cries and fights getting on the bus may have trouble with some classmates or on the playground. Your child's teacher can help keep an eye out for something bigger going on. The teacher can also rely on school specialists like the guidance counselor for additional help if needed.
- The reading material being used at school or for homework seems consistently too hard or too easy for your child. To make the most progress, your child should be reading books with at least 90% accuracy. While some reading of very easy books is great for building confidence and reading speed, most readers also need some practice decoding new words. Books that are too difficult are frustrating for your child, and may not build any new reading skills.
- The comments on your child's paper are unclear to you. A teacher's notes in the margins of papers or on individual math problems often help parents understand what the teacher is trying to reinforce. For example, in math, your child's teacher may have a routine for teaching regrouping that she reinforces with certain notes. In writing, the teacher may expect certain words to be spelled correctly, while allowing invented spelling for other words.

A good working relationship between parents and teachers benefits everyone. It's best to begin your communication with the teacher, rather than calling the principal or the superintendent. Because your teacher has such close contact with your child, he or she will have the most information about a situation. Staying in touch, asking questions and heading off problems before they become too big are all ways to build a strong relationship.

For more information, visit the Reading Rockets Families and Schools section:

http://www.ReadingRockets.org/atoz/families_and_schools

If you're new to the U.S., read these tips on talking to your child's teacher:

<http://www.ColorinColorado.org/families/school/whynottalk>

