

## **A Dad's Guide to Getting the Most Out of Parent Teacher Conferences**

Even the term "parent-teacher conference" can raise anxiety in the heart of any dad, particularly when your own mom and dad came home from such conferences with a need to "lay down the law."

### **Why We Dislike Them.**

First, many dads and moms see parent teacher conferences as an evaluation of their parenting skills. "If my kid is having a hard time at school," we reason, "it must be because of us."

We also worry about the notions the teacher may have about us based on our children. "I can't wait to meet Cindy's mom and dad!" we imagine the teacher thinking from time to time.

Public education is still overwhelming to many of us, despite the fact that most of us spent at least 13 years in the system. The teacher in most cases has the advantage over us in this setting, and we can feel a little intimidated if we don't know what to expect.

### **What Dads Can Do About PTC Anxiety**

*Relax and Get Comfortable.* Maybe the upcoming conference is the first for you as a kindergarten dad, or perhaps you have just let your kids' mom handle this trivial detail. Parent teacher conferences are not intimidating; in fact, teachers often go the extra mile to make sure you feel comfortable.

*Talk to your child before the conference.* Ask some pointed questions in a cordial interview such as "What do you like best about school this year?" and "Are there school activities that you'd like to spend more time on?" ParentSoup offers an excellent checklist of questions to ask your child prior to the conference.

*Ask for specifics.* Men have a tendency to deal better with specifics of behavior; often our partners will be more attuned to the abstract issues. If the teacher raises positives or negatives about your child at school, ask for

specific circumstances. It will help you understand the teacher's perspective as well as give you a head start on an action plan.

Use the teacher as a resource. If problems surface during the conference with your child's performance, ask the teacher for suggestions of what might help at home. Rather than being defensive, taking the approach of an active listener can be really helpful.

Make a plan and schedule a follow up. If there are issues that need addressing, take the initiative to create an action plan. Discuss what things might help the situation at home, at school, and in the student's homework time. And then set up a time in the future to come back and address the results of the plan and do some fine tuning.

By taking the initiative and preparing, fathers can be a significant player in the period parent teacher conference and in helping with the education of their children.