



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES: ***Questions to ask your child's teachers about how well he or she is learning to read and write***

Learning to read is one of the most important skills your child will develop while in school. It's important for you, as a parent, to know how that's going. With that in mind, we've come up with some questions you may want to use when you meet with your child's teacher for parent-teacher conferences. There's no need to ask every one of these, but it's a good idea to think about the questions below, and ask the ones that make the most sense given your child's development.

Sometimes information about literacy can be confusing, so don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions! If the teacher says something you don't understand or that doesn't seem to fit what you know about your child, ask the teacher to explain in more detail or to give examples.

Also check out Advocates for Children's *Questions & Answers about Literacy: A fact sheet for families of students who need more help learning to read and write*, available in English and Spanish at http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/get_help/guides_and_resources.

Start with the following questions...

- What should my child be able to do by the end of this year with respect to reading and writing? Is he/she on track to do that? How do you know?
- What formal or informal reading assessments are you using to track student progress during the year? Is there anything I should know about those assessments?
- Can you give me more information about how my child is doing in reading and writing?
 - Is he/she learning to decode (sound out words)?
 - Does my child understand what he/she reads?
 - Is his/her reading fluent (does it flow well)?
 - Are there any skills he/she seems to be struggling with?
 - Does my child seem to enjoy reading and writing?
- What can I do to support my child's growth in these important skill areas?
- How can I make reading more enjoyable and meaningful for my child?
- How will you keep me updated on my child's progress in reading and writing?

If the teacher says your child is meeting expectations and that feels right to you, then you can stop there and move onto other important topics you want to cover at your conference.

However, if either you or the teacher has concerns about your child's literacy development, we recommend that you ask more detailed questions, like the ones below...

- What extra help or support do you provide students who are having trouble learning to read and write? Does this school use Response to Intervention (RtI) for reading or provide any interventions, either inside or outside of your classroom?
- Is my child currently receiving any extra help or interventions?

IF YES...

- What program or strategy is being used? Can you give me more information about how the program works?
- Why did you choose this intervention for my child?
- When do you think we'll see progress?
- What's the next step if it doesn't seem to help?

If your child doesn't currently receive any special education services, you may want to ask...

- If my child is struggling in class and/or I see her struggling with homework, do you think I should ask for an evaluation to consider special education services?

If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and gets special education services, you may want to ask...

- Who at the school is working with my child to meet the progress goals on his/her IEP?
 - If it's *not* the teacher you're speaking with, ask how to contact that person and ask them this same set of questions.
- Can you tell me more about the approach you're using to teach my child literacy skills?
- Do you have experience working with students with disabilities similar to my child's? Does this approach to teaching reading usually work well for other children with disabilities?
- Do you think my child is getting all the support he/she needs to make progress in reading and writing?
- Do you think assistive technology (AT) might be helpful for my child? Should I ask for an AT evaluation?

If your child is an English Language Learner (ELL), you may want to ask...

- Can you give me more information about how my child is doing in reading and writing in our home language?
- Is his/her vocabulary developing in English as fast as it is in our home language?
- Are there specific strategies you would recommend we use at home in our home language to help with my child's literacy development?