



## Working Collaboratively with School Staff When You Have a Concern



**A**s parents, we're constantly observing and monitoring our children's health, happiness, development, friendships, and school progress, to mention a few. It can be difficult when we have questions or concerns about school to get accurate and complete information from our child. It's common for a child to provide one perspective on a situation, which may leave parents with questions. Also, parents' attempts at conversations are often met with short, vague responses. For example, when parents ask how the child's school day was, children often respond with some version of, "it was fine."



### Here are some ways to gather information about your child's school day if you have concerns:

- **Observe social interactions** when you drop your child off at school, pick your child up from school, and attend school events.
- **If your child is involved in any extracurricular activities** through school, observe your child's interactions with peers, teachers, and coaches.
- **Ensure that your child completes assigned homework**, so you know what is expected and how well your child is learning the material.
- **Review your child's work that gets sent home.** Many teachers use folders to send completed and graded work home on a daily or weekly basis.
- **Read and respond to emails and notes** that teachers send home.
- **Monitor your child's grades if the teacher uses an online grade platform.** This could tell you if your child is submitting work by the deadlines, how your child is performing on daily work, how your child is performing on tests, and attendance information.
- **Listen to conversations that your child has with siblings and friends about school.** Car rides can be a great time to just listen and learn about your child.

If, despite your efforts to gather information, you continue to have concerns about your child's academic progress, behavior, and/or social relationships, here are some tips:

- **You as parents are your child's first and most important teachers.** Have your child practice at home and establish a daily study routine. Make

[continued >](#)

sure that your child consistently completes assigned homework.

- **Ensure that your child is getting enough sleep and eating breakfast each morning.**
- **Contact your child's classroom teacher or homeroom teacher.** Ask neutral, open-ended questions to gather information. Examples of questions might include the following:
  - *He seems to get frustrated when doing math homework. Do you have any concerns about his progress in math?*
  - *I've noticed behavior sheets in his backpack. Could we please arrange a time to talk, so I can better understand the concerns and find ways to help?*
  - *What do you notice at recess? He tells me that no one will play with him.*
- **If parent-teacher conferences are approaching,** you might send a message ahead of time asking to address a few specific topics. This will allow your child's teacher to pay special attention to any areas that are of concern and to prepare information ahead of time.
- **If it will be a while until parent-teacher conferences,** you could contact your child's teacher and ask to arrange a brief phone call or meeting to discuss your concerns.
- **If you have discussed concerns with your child's teacher and the concerns persist,** you could arrange a meeting with your child's school counselor to discuss them. School counselors often spend time in classrooms providing lessons on social/emotional learning topics, and they may facilitate friendship groups to assist students with developing healthy friendships.
- **If you continue to have concerns,** you could request a multi-disciplinary team meeting. These teams are often comprised of professionals from several disciplines, and may include a classroom teacher, special education teacher, speech therapist, school counselor, school psychologist, and school principal. The goals of this type of meeting are to discuss concerns, to determine if additional supports/interventions are needed, and if so, to develop an intervention plan. If an

intervention plan is developed, this same team will schedule a follow-up meeting to evaluate progress and to determine appropriate next steps. It is helpful to be patient and focus on data when monitoring progress.

- **If your child has a diagnosed medical condition that you feel may negatively affect your child's learning,** your child may qualify for a 504 Accommodation Plan. Examples of medical conditions may include anxiety, ADHD, and Crohn's Disease. When a 504 Plan is in place, school staff provide accommodations to limit the impact of the health stressor on your child's education. Examples of common accommodations are extra time on tests, taking tests in a private space that is quiet, and being allowed to use the restroom whenever it is needed. To determine if this is appropriate, contact your child's school counselor to discuss your concerns and specifically ask about a 504 Plan.
- **If your child's academic performance falls significantly below grade level in reading, writing, or math,** and your child has not responded to other interventions, school staff may ask your permission to conduct a special education evaluation. This type of evaluation often includes reviewing your child's academic records, observing your child in the classroom, and also may involve completing rating forms and additional evaluation of your child's academic skills. Parents would meet with the school team to discuss the results of the evaluation, determine if your child qualifies for additional services, and if so, develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Remember that you and your child's teacher(s) are partners, working toward shared goals. Show appreciation toward your child's teacher(s) and communicate early on if you have a concern, asking how you can help.

➔ **For more information** or to make an appointment at the Boys Town Center for Behavioral Health, call **531-355-3358**.

Visit **BoysTown.org/Parenting** for more information from the parenting experts at Boys Town.

