

ed post

stories >

explainers

podcasts

videos

resources >



Donate >

4 Tips for Parents to Get the Most out of Parent-Teacher Conferences



Oct 18, 2019 12:00:00 AM

by Shawnta S. Barnes    

Many schools are preparing for their first conferences with parents. Unlike Back-to-School Night where parents receive general information about the school, a conference with your child's teacher is a time to focus on your child. Parents should be prepared for conferences to maximize their impact. Here are some suggestions for what you should do.

Know When the Conferences Will Be Held

I cannot tell you how many times a parent called me a week after conferences trying to find out when the conferences were. Then, I had to inform the parent that conferences took place the prior week. If you don't know, don't get an attitude with the teacher.

[pullquote]Most educators will still schedule a time to meet with you even if you miss the date of the actual conference—but please know this puts a burden on the teacher.[/pullquote] Some schools close so teachers can have conferences all day, so meeting with you after that time means the teacher will have to sacrifice time from something else.

Look at Your Child's School Work and Grades

You should not arrive at conferences without knowing about your child's progress. Papers come home at least weekly, and grades are being put into the gradebook. Almost every school has parent access to grades online. Most even have an app so you can view grades on your phone.

There are those teachers who are slipping and cannot seem to put grades in the gradebook consistently or in a timely manner. That's why you check. It is not fair to your child for a teacher to put all the grades in right before they are due. Then, you don't have any recourse to help your child if he or she is failing.

Yes, I have inquired about my sons' grades and asked where they were. [pullquote]If you are doing your part and are checking your child's backpack and grades and you have no information about your child's progress, don't leave that conference until you get it.[/pullquote]

Write Down Questions to Ask

Conferences are typically scheduled back to back. The teacher is watching the clock and trying to get through all of the information. Knowing this, [pullquote position="right"]you have to prioritize your questions. And if you don't write them down, you might forget.[/pullquote]

I always start with academics. Some teachers want to tell you how bad your kid is first. That is no way to start a conference. Make sure your child is learning because poor behavior is sometimes a way for your child who is struggling to escape school work.

Follow Up in a Couple of Weeks

It doesn't matter how much you follow up, teachers are obligated to engage and respond to parents. If the teacher expresses concerns, make sure you circle back and see how your child is doing in a couple of weeks.

Please don't miss your child's conference. It is one of the best ways to get an update on your child.

A version of this post originally appeared on Indy 12 as "[Parents, Are You Prepared for School Conference Time?](#)."

[Photo by Cathy Yeulet, Canva-licensed.](#)

Shawnta S. Barnes

Shawnta (Shawn-tay) S. Barnes, also known as Educator Barnes, is a married mother of identical twin boys. She navigates education from not only the educator's perspective but also the parent's perspective. She has been an educator for nearly two decades. Shawnta works with K-12 schools, universities, & education adjacent organizations through her education consulting business Blazing Brilliance. She is an adjunct college professor, supervises student teachers, Indy Kids Winning Editor-in-Chief, Brave Brothers Books Co-founder, & CEO, and Brazen Education Podcast host. She holds five education licenses: English/language arts 5-12, English to speakers of other languages P-12, library/media P-12, reading P-12, and school administration P-12, and she has held a job in every licensed area. Previously, she has served as a school administrator, English teacher, English learners teacher, literacy coach, and librarian. She won the 2019 Indiana Black Expo Excellence in Education Journalism Award. In 2023, she completed her doctorate in Literacy, Culture, and Language Education with a minor in Learning Sciences. She is an urban gardener in her spare time and writes about her harvest-to-table journey at [gardenershicole.com](https://www.gardenershicole.com). To learn more about Shawnta, visit educatorbarnes.com.

[view profile](#)

Leave a Comment

First Name*

Last Name

Email*



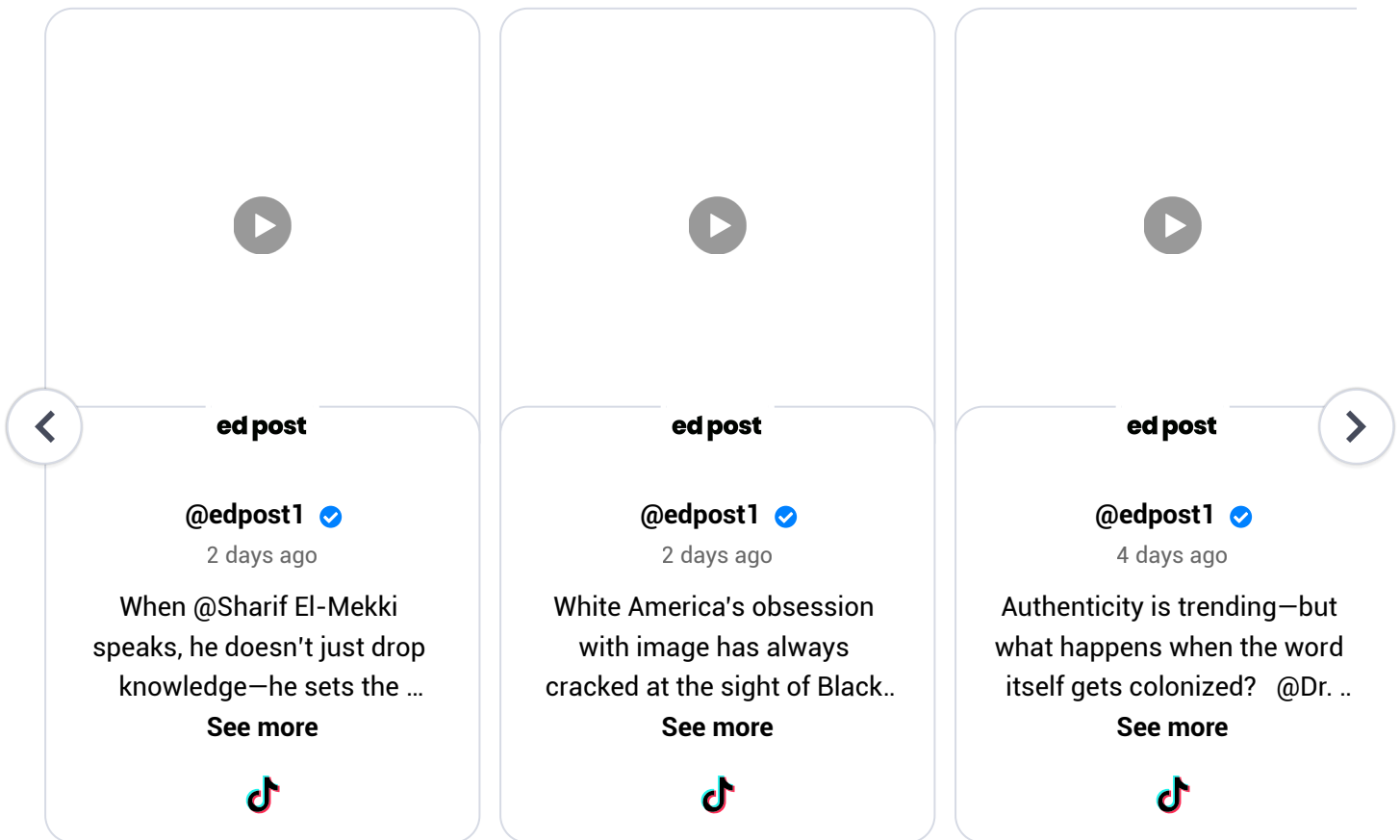
Comment*

protected by reCAPTCHA

[Privacy](#) - [Terms](#)

Submit Comment

The Feed



Explainers

[all explainers >](#)

What's an IEP and How to Ensure Your Child's Needs Are Met?

[Ed Post Staff](#)



If you have a child with disabilities, you're not alone: According to the latest data, over 7 million American schoolchildren — 14% of all students ages 3-21 — are classified as eligible for special...

read more



Follow our social media and newsletter to take action.

Submit



ed post

Stories
Explainers
Podcasts

Videos
Take
Action
About

Privacy
Policy
Resources





Ed Post is the flagship website platform of brightbeam, a 501(c3) network of education activists and influencers demanding a better education and a brighter future for every child.

© 2020–2025 brightbeam. All rights reserved.