

## from the TEACHERS' LOUNGE

*Heritage Christian School (our school in Hudsonville, MI) reprinted last fall, on the back of one of their school notes, an October 8, 1989 Grand Rapids Press article on parent-teacher conferences. The authors, Peggy Gisler and Marge Eberts, offered helpful hints for parents who want to learn (in the short time ordinarily allotted for conference with the teacher) as much as they can about their child's progress in school. Those of our parents who have not already seen the article may appreciate being able to read it before the spring conferences which will be coming up soon in many of our schools. Here it is:*

### PLAN QUESTIONS FOR PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Q: Please explain how I can find out how my son really is doing in second grade during one 10-minute conference a year. Can you give me any suggestions I can make the most of my conference time?

Also, is there any way I can get the teacher to start right into the conference without wasting the first few minutes making small talk?

A: Even though you are working under a tight time restriction, a face-to-face conference has many benefits. You should be able to leave the conference with a clear picture of how well your child is doing. However, the trick lies in your preparation.

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child overcome any weaknesses?  
Is special help required?

\* What achievement, aptitude, or competency tests has my child taken in the past year, and what do his scores mean?

\* How would you describe my child's work habits? Does he complete classwork and turn in all homework?

\* Does my child get along well with classmates and the teacher?

If you still have time, then you can continue with some of the following questions:

\* Are there discipline problems?

\* Can we look over some of my child's work together?

\* How does my child's work compare to that of children working in his group or higher groups?

\* Does my child show any behaviors such as squinting or not hearing instructions which might signal medical problems?

\* What major projects will my child be required to do this year?

More and more schools are helping their teachers prepare for conferences. And most teachers spend long hours getting ready.

It's quite likely that the teacher will answer your basic questions without you asking them. The teacher also may ask you some questions, so be ready to answer questions like these:

\* What is your child's attitude

toward school?

\* Does your child have any concerns or worries about any specific school situations or subject areas?

\* Does your child have any special needs?

\* What are your child's hobbies and special interests?

\* Does your child have a regular time set aside to study?

\* How much time does your child spend on homework?

\* What are your child's strengths and weaknesses?

You can help the conference be a success by arriving at least

five minutes before your scheduled time. Don't bring the school child unless requested to do so, or younger children to the conference.

Incidentally, you can avoid wasting minutes in aimless chit-chat at the beginning of the conference by politely mentioning right away that you have a number of questions to be asked in the limited time.

At the conference, keep a pencil handy to write down any suggestions or things you want to remember. Try to establish rapport with the teacher so you can work together to help your child. Be warm and friendly and avoid criticism and arguments.

Before the conference ends, express appreciation for the teacher's time. If you have all your questions written out, you

can check the ones that weren't answered and ask the teacher to answer them when it's convenient. detail at a later date.

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If you discover that your child