



# Reach Out to Families: Parent-Teacher Conversations About Learning

Holding a structured grade-level or classroom conversation between teachers and parents is a powerful way to form a partnership to improve student learning. It can be done in an hour. The goal of the conversation is to discuss how parents and teachers can work together to help children develop crucial academic skills. Follow up with positive communications and another conversation later in the year to check on progress and revise the goals and plan.

A conversation can take place as part of activities the school is already doing. For example, a back-to-school night can be restructured so that parents meet with teachers in the classroom. Other possibilities include literacy night, parent workshops, open house, parent-teacher conferences, PTA nights, or during a professional development day.

1. **Icebreaker/welcome** (10-12 mins) Welcome families, and seat them in small groups:
  - Ask: “Share with each other in your groups some things you’re doing at home to help your child with learning.”
  - After awhile, ask tables to report out, one idea per table at a time. Chart the answers.
  - Listen closely and affirm what they say. This builds trust and establishes a warm, personal relationship, plus gives good information about what to build on.
2. **Share data on key skills** (10 mins)
  - Share with parents the general learning goals for the year and explain the reading and math skills where students need the most help.
  - Explain what the skills are and how they are measured. (e.g. Fluency: Fourth graders should be able to read 105 words a minute correctly and with expression. Our students average about 62 words, and only 15% are at grade level.)
3. **Model a teaching strategy that addresses this learning goal.** (5 mins): “Here is something that I do with your children in the classroom that you could do at home.” Pick 1-2 strategies that parents can easily use at home
4. **Practice this activity at tables.** (10 mins) Ask parents to pair up. One parent plays the child and the other parent tries out the approach the teacher just shared. (During this activity, walk around and coach the parents, as needed.)
5. **Ask parents which strategies they would like to use at home.** (5 mins) (e.g. If your child is at a 62 in fluency now, where would you want/expect him to be in January?”) Coach parents to set realistic goals.
6. **Ask parents: “How can I help you and your child accomplish this goal and make growth?”** (10 mins) Chart parents’ questions and ideas. (e.g. Can we come watch you teach this in class? Can you record any weekly progress in my child’s planner? Can you send us more ideas about how to help at home? Can we borrow books and math games from the class library?) All this information can be used as material for the Title I school-parent compact.\*
7. **Closure.** (5 mins) Explain how you will follow up. Share your contact information.

\* For tools and a 10-step process to revitalizing your School-Parent Compact and aligning it with Common Core Standards, go to [www.ctschoolparentcompact.org](http://www.ctschoolparentcompact.org)