

PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS

Fixit and Knack are anxious about the upcoming parent-teacher meeting at school. They have never gone to one and are not sure what's expected, until they watch a film that explains it all.

NARRATED MESSAGE // *Caregivers and families have a lot of valuable information about their children, but school meetings can be intimidating. Many people in Indigenous communities are anxious about schools and worry about discrimination and language barriers. So, how can educators work towards building relationships between school and home? It takes a whole village to raise a child, according to a well-known proverb. Education is an important process that is shared between home, school, and the community. Learning about First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures and about traditional ways of learning from caregivers, guardians and members of the community, can help to better connect with students and establish better communication between home and school. Welcoming caregivers to meet and attend school events along with friendly phone calls are great opportunities to connect. Reaching out to caregivers in the community can have a real impact in students' lives helping them improve their chances of success on all fronts.*

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the messages in this film?
2. Why is it important to build relationships with Indigenous families?
3. What factors reduce attendance at parent-teacher meetings?
4. How can the school encourage Indigenous caregivers to connect with the school?
5. What might support caregiver and teacher communication to enhance student success?
6. Are there families at our school that require additional support in order to enhance their children's learning?

IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

- Not everyone is aware of the value of parent-teacher meetings; clarifying their importance to student success is key. Offering flexibility in scheduling and location will go a long way.
- It may be difficult for caregivers to participate due to work, transportation or childcare responsibilities. Anxiety about visiting the school and speaking with staff may also play a part.
- Students themselves can be effective messengers, encouraging their caregivers to attend. By describing these meetings in a positive way, we can make students and caregivers more likely to want to participate.
- It can help to allay concerns by telling caregivers in advance about the goal of the meeting. These will likely be more constructive if caregivers feel prepared and have a say. If taking notes, we can explain what their purpose is. We can use the online Language Tool to learn how to greet families in their mother tongue, should it be one of the included languages.
- We should be aware of differences in communication, while modeling respectful interaction. It is helpful to try to avoid adversarial seating arrangements and be mindful of one's physical size, voice and body language. We can use language everyday people can understand and avoid jargon or acronyms. We can explore COPA and OTF's Professional Learning Module at safeatschool.ca to learn more about engaging caregivers as meaningful partners in their children's education.