

Parent-Teacher Conferences: Unit Activities

Activities

I. Vocabulary: Matching School Staff (*Appendices A and B*)

(Vocabulary/Speaking)

These worksheets can be used as an introduction to school staff. Elicit what students already know about school staff and their jobs. The worksheet may be done in pairs, groups, or as a class. Follow it with a discussion of staff's responsibilities.

Lower-level students may use worksheet A, which matches only pictures with the labels. Higher students may be given worksheet B, which describes the staff's jobs. Alternatively, start with worksheet A for all levels and follow it with worksheet B, to clarify job descriptions.

It may also be useful to discuss additional staff members (music teacher, art teacher, etc), especially those which are relevant to the students' children's schools.

II. Communicating with the School Staff (*Appendix C*)

(Speaking/Reading)

These "situations cards" should be used after students have learned or reviewed school staff so that they have the necessary vocabulary.

Hand out the cards, perhaps one at a time to groups, and ask students to read the card and discuss which of the school staff they should talk to about the situation. Perhaps model the activity first with one situation and a "think aloud" example. After the groups discuss the situation and determine who they would contact, they can present their case to the rest of the class. (They may want to keep worksheets A and B handy to choose from the lists given there.) Alternatively, combine some groups and ask them to explain their decisions to each other.

For lower level students, some of the cards may be eliminated (for example, the last four), or students may be grouped based on levels and given specific cards. For more advanced students or classes, perhaps distribute an entire set of cards to the group of students and ask them to discuss all of the situations.

III. School Staff (*Appendix D*)

(Reading/Writing)

This worksheet should be used after students have learned the vocabulary in Activity I. It may be given as (optional) homework or as an in-class task, perhaps using the school handbook for guidance, if it is available, or using the school website if computers are available. Lower students may be asked only to fill in the name of the person, while higher students may be asked to write complete sentences.

Note that not all questions are applicable to all schools or parents—a school may not have an assistant principal, for example—and adjust the worksheet as necessary.

IV. What does this Person Do?

(Speaking/Grammar/TPR)

After learning staff vocabulary and what they do (particularly the information in Appendix B), students and teacher play this game, in which they toss a ball to each other and review school staff's responsibilities. Before playing the game, the instructor may find it necessary to review the question structure and to review the third-person present-tense verb ending.

The instructor begins with a soft ball or a sheet of paper crumpled into a ball and everyone stands in a circle. The instructor asks "What does the _____ do?" (i.e. "What does the custodian do?") and tosses the ball to someone in the circle. That person should (try to) catch it and respond to the question (i.e. "The custodian cleans the school in the afternoons."). That person then can ask another question and toss the ball to another student. The instructor should help students focus on getting the present tense correct with third-person endings!

For lower groups, the instructor should have the question and answer structures on the board. S/He can also brainstorm a list of school staff with the students before the game, and have that list on the board. For mixed groups in which the instructor would like to control the level of each question for each student, an alternative approach is for the student who answers a question to silently throw the ball to the next student and then the instructor chooses the question.

For an additional challenge, for a group of students who are able to handle it, some questions might be repeated but should be answered differently each time (i.e. "What does the secretary do?" – 1. "The secretary answers the phone in the office." 2. "The secretary organizes student records.")

V. Vocabulary: School Subjects *(Appendices E and F)*

(Vocabulary)

Like Activity I, these worksheets may be used as an introduction to school subjects. The instructor should elicit what students already know first.

The instructor may give lower-level students worksheet E, which matches only pictures with the labels and requires students to write the subjects. Higher students may be given worksheet F, which describes the subject and should be cut up for students to match (or students can write the correct answer in the space following the description). Alternatively, the instructor may choose to cut apart the information in worksheet E and the pictures from worksheet F and ask students to match the name of the subject, the description of the subject, and the picture. If conducted this way, it's best in small groups.

This activity may be followed by a discussion of how these subjects differ elementary, middle, and high school, and how these subjects differ in the US and the students' native countries.

VI. Report Cards

(Reading/Speaking)

The instructor should obtain a school report card, from the school where or nearest the teaching site, if possible (otherwise, s/he may obtain one from the internet that is relevant to the students' children's grade levels).

Before looking at the report card, the instructor should teach questions of clarification. Teach two versions: one for situations in which a person didn't hear (e.g. "What was that?") and one for situations in which a person doesn't understand (e.g. "Sorry, could you explain that?").

Then, the class should look at the report cards together; the instructor or any strong students can explain sections or vocabulary, while the other students ask questions of clarification in response and the instructor repeats or explains again.

VII. Vocabulary: School (Appendices G and H)

(Vocabulary/Reading/Writing)

Like Activities I and V, this is a vocabulary-building exercise. Again, the instructor should elicit what is already known.

In this activity, the version for lower-level students (Appendix G) has fewer words and shorter definitions. For especially low students, the teacher can give each student a copy of this form with one answer already filled in, a different answer for each student. They would then be instructed to share the answers—verbally—with each other.

The higher version (Appendix H) has more words and slightly more complex definitions. This can be done in pairs or groups, or it can be done as instructed above—each student can be given one answer (perhaps on a note-card) which he/she then shares with his/her classmates.

VIII. Vocabulary: Behavior (Appendices I and J)

(Vocabulary/Speaking/Reading/Writing)

This is another vocabulary-building activity in preparation for parent-teacher conferences. First, the instructor should teach the concepts of “behavior” and “personality” and teach the phrases “well behaved” and “behaving badly” or “naughty.”

The instructor should cut the answer key (Appendix I) into strips and hand out one strip to each student (longer or harder words to more advanced students and shorter or simpler words to lower students). Students should also receive a copy of Appendix J. Students fill in their vocabulary word on Appendix J and then share it with other students *verbally* (not by showing them their word and definition)—teach them to ask “Which word do you have?” and “What does it mean?” The instructor may choose, depending on the attention and levels of the students as well as the time, how many classmates they should ask.

This activity may be followed by a discussion of whether these words are positive/good or negative/bad—it may be necessary to start with an example, like shy, that could go both ways and demonstrate the use of the phrase “It depends on the situation.” If students are capable, ask them to explain situations. For lower students, the teacher may explain or act out a situation in which a student is (fill in vocabulary) and then ask them if the behavior is positive or negative.

IX. Listen: A Short Parent-Teacher Conference (Appendices K and L)

(Listening/Writing)

The teacher may choose to pre-record the conversation below or read it in class (recording has the benefit of consistency). Playing the conversation at least four times is recommended: the first time can be used as an introduction, and the teacher can ask general comprehension questions after listening. Then, students receive Appendix K (low level) or Appendix L (high level) and during the second listening, attempt to fill in the missing information. The conversation can then be played twice more to allow students to complete the cloze or check their answers. The teacher can check any vocabulary

understanding after the third or fourth time. (Go over common phrases like “have a seat” “good at” and “that sounds good.”)

Parent: Good evening! Are you Mr. Jones?

Teacher: Hello! Yes, I am.

Parent: I’m Jane Corley, Holly’s mother.

Teacher: Nice to meet you. Please, have a seat.

Parent: How is Holly doing in class?

Teacher: Pretty well! Overall, Holly is a good student. She is good at math, and she’s always well-behaved. She’s polite and respectful.

Parent: Is there anything she should improve?

Teacher: She just needs help in reading.

Parent: What do you suggest?

Teacher: Read to her at home. Take her to the library. There are a lot of good children’s books there. Ask her to read to you.

Parent: That sounds good. We’ll do that.

Teacher: Great!

Parent: Thank you!

X. Questions & Comments for Parent-Teacher Conferences (Appendix M)

(Grammar/Speaking/Reading)

Before giving out the handout (Appendix M) and after introducing the idea of parent-teacher conferences, the instructor should practice question-and-answer structure with the students, to the extent that the class in general needs it: as a complete lesson, as a mini-lesson, or as a quick review. Yes/No questions should be examined as a contrast to Wh- questions.

Then, the instructor can ask students to generate a list of questions to ask a teacher in a conference. This may be done in small groups, as a think-pair-share activity, or all together, adjusted for level. If the students are at a high level or can handle multiple instructions, they could also generate a list of questions to ask their children, and/or a list of comments they should make to the teacher (see Appendix M).

Students can then read the questions on the handout and compare their lists to them, as well as discuss why (or whether) these questions are important.

XI. Parent-Teacher Conference Sentence Strips (Appendix N)

(Reading/Listening)

After completing Activity IX (and preferably also Activity X), the conversation in Appendix N can be cut into strips and distributed to groups of students with the instructions to put the conversation in the correct order.

Especially for lower- and mid-level students, this can also be made into a listening activity (This also depends on what the teacher prefers to focus on—listening and reading skills or just reading comprehension). The instructor may record or read the conversation before or during the time in which the students try to order the sentences. In a very mixed-level class, lower level students may be given the strips from the start in order to put the sentences in order as they listen multiple times, and higher

level students may be given the strips only after listening. Another alternative option for strong students is for the teacher to delete or cut off the “parent” and “teacher” labels so that students have more of a challenge in figuring out who is speaking.

XII. Suggestions for Parents (Appendix O)

(Speaking/Reading/Writing)

After introducing the structure of parent-teacher conferences in Activities IX and XI (possibly also X), the instructor can help the students understand suggestions from the teacher’s point of view with Appendix O.

Students receive this worksheet and in groups, read the situations, and make suggestions for the parents in the situation. Higher level groups of students can receive the whole worksheet and discuss then write their ideas, while for lower level groups the instructor may choose to cut apart the situations and give only the second situation, which is the easiest to understand.

The instructor may instead divide the class into three groups, give each group one situation (the lowest would receive the second) and ask them to discuss and write their ideas and then present the situation and their suggestions to the class.

XIII. Practice: A Parent-Teacher Conference (Appendices P and Q)

(Writing/Speaking)

As a final activity, students should hold a mini parent-teacher conference with a partner. The worksheets of Appendices P and Q will likely be useful, but for very advanced students they may not be entirely necessary.

Students may want to have the worksheet in Appendix M handy again for this activity. Before asking the students to role play as parent and teacher, the class should discuss questions for the teacher again and be given an opportunity to form their own questions. Students may be put into groups to in order to formulate their questions, and the instructor should help them create questions that are relevant to their concerns.

This activity would be best if students are paired by level. Lower level students should receive Appendix P and be instructed to read it and then fill in their information and the suggestion. The person playing the parent and the person playing the teacher can write the information together before they read it and role play.

With Appendix Q, higher level students have more freedom. Depending on how capable the students are with this material, the instructor could either encourage them to have the conversation first and write it afterwards or to write first and then read the conversation. The first option will likely produce more natural language. In this version of the worksheet, there is much more freedom for what will happen in the conversation and the students can choose which questions will be asked.

No matter the level, students should be encouraged to look back on previous handouts and their notes for help.

Appendix List: Worksheets

A. "Vocabulary: Matching School Staff" (Low)

B. "Vocabulary: Matching School Staff" (High)

- C. *"Communicating With School Staff"*
- D. *"Staff at Your Child's School"*
- E. *"Vocabulary: School Subjects" (Low)*
- F. *"Vocabulary: School Subjects" (High)*
- G. *"Vocabulary: School" (Low)*
- H. *"Vocabulary: School" (High)*
- I. *"Vocabulary: Behavior and Personality (Answer Key)"*
- J. *"Vocabulary: Behavior and Personality"*
- K. *"Listen: A Short Parent-Teacher Conference" (Low)*
- L. *"Listen: A Short Parent-Teacher Conference" (High)*
- M. *"Questions and Comments for Parent-Teacher Conferences"*
- N. *"Parent-Teacher Conference Sentence Strips"*
- O. *"Suggestions for Parents"*
- P. *"Practice: A Parent-Teacher Conference" (Low)*
- Q. *"Practice: A Parent-Teacher Conference" (High)*

Vocabulary: Matching School Staff

A.



B.



C.



D.



E.



F.



G.



H.



I.



- _____ 1. Principal
- _____ 2. Counselor
- _____ 3. Teacher
- _____ 4. Custodian
- _____ 5. School Board
- _____ 6. Librarian
- _____ 7. Secretary
- _____ 8. Superintendent
- _____ 9. School Nurse

Vocabulary: Matching School Staff

School Board	Counselor (Guidance Counselor)
Superintendent	Librarian (LMC Director)
Principal	School nurse
Assistant Principal (Vice Principal)	Secretary (Administrative Clerk)
Teacher	Custodian (Janitor)

We are a group that makes decisions for a school district.

I direct and manage an entire school district.

I am responsible for a whole school and the staff.

I help with supervision. I am the advisor to the person in charge of a school.

I educate and instruct a group of students for a school year.

I provide advice to the students about educational and personal decisions.

I organize the books and media for the school.

I help sick and injured students and provide health education and advice.

I am responsible for student records, letters, and phone calls.

I clean the school, usually after students go home.

Communicating with School Staff

You want a copy of the school calendar.	Your child cannot see the whiteboard in the classroom.
Your child had a fight with another student.	Your child had a fight with the teacher.
Your child lost a school library book.	Your child does not understand his or her science homework.
Your child wants to play soccer for the school team.	You want to have free school lunch for your child.
You want to join a parents' group at the school.	Another student is bullying your child.
Your child did well in math last year, but now his or her math grades are very low.	You are worried about the safety procedures in the school.



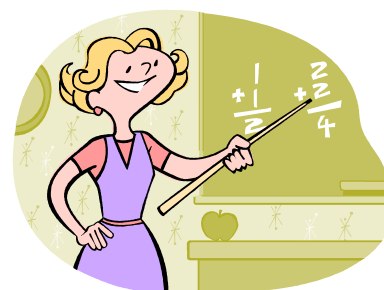
Staff at Your Child's School

D

Your name: _____ Your Child's School: _____

Do you know the names of the staff at your child's school?

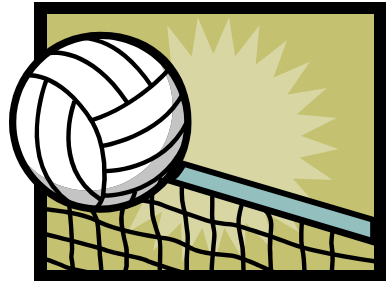
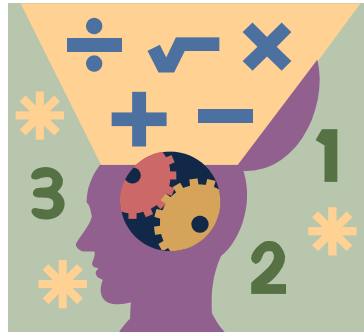
1. Who is the principal?
2. Who is your child's teacher? (Or: who are your child's teachers?)
3. Who is the secretary?
4. Who is the counselor?
5. Who is the bilingual resource or ESL teacher?
6. Who is your child's bus driver?
7. Who is the superintendent?
8. Who is the librarian?
9. Who is the assistant principal?



Vocabulary: School Subjects



Math
Science
Reading (Language Arts)
Social Studies
Foreign Languages
Art
Music
Gym (P.E.)



Vocabulary: School Subjects**A. Foreign Languages****E. Math****B. Art****F. Music****C. Science****G. Social Studies****D. Reading (Language Arts)****H. Gym (P.E.)**

1. ____ Students learn to add, subtract, multiply, and divide numbers.
2. ____ Students study topics like animals, plants, the earth, space, chemicals, and the body.
3. ____ Students learn how to read books and write.
4. ____ Students study countries, governments, and societies.
5. ____ Students learn how to speak, listen, read, and write a new language.
6. ____ Students paint and draw and learn about colors.
7. ____ Students learn to sing and play instruments.
8. ____ Students learn about exercise and sports.

Vocabulary: School

Match the words with the definitions

Assignment	Cafeteria	Classroom
Deadline	Extra credit	Field trip
Grade	Gym	Homework
L.M.C.	Parent-teacher conference	Recess
		Test

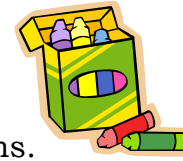
- _____ – a room with a teacher and students
- _____ – where students eat
- _____ – where students practice sports and exercise
- _____ – the school library
- _____ – a classroom task
- _____ – assignments to do at home
- _____ – a level in school (like: 5th) OR a score (like: A)
- _____ – optional work students do to improve a grade
- _____ – an exam
- _____ – a time something must be completed
- _____ – a visit outside the school so students can learn
- _____ – free time when students play
- _____ – a meeting between a teacher and parents





Vocabulary: School

Match the words with their definitions.



Assembly	Assignment	Auditorium	Cafeteria	Classroom	Deadline	
Extra credit	Field trip	Fire drill	Grade	Group work	Gym	Homework
L.M.C.	Locker	Parent-teacher conference		Quiz	Recess	Test

- _____ – a room for a teacher and many students to study
- _____ – a classroom task
- _____ – assignments to do at home
- _____ – a big room for concerts and assemblies
- _____ – where students eat
- _____ – the school library
- _____ – where students practice sports and exercise
- _____ – a level in school (like: 5th) OR a score (like: A)
- _____ – a meeting between a teacher and parents
- _____ – a short test without a lot of preparation
- _____ – an exam students take to measure their knowledge
- _____ – a visit to a place outside of school for students to learn
- _____ – a date or time something must be completed
- _____ – a free time for students to play outside of the classroom
- _____ – a meeting of all of the students in a school
- _____ – a time to practice emergency procedures
- _____ – an assignment some students must do together
- _____ – a cabinet where students can store their things
- _____ – optional work students do to improve a grade

Vocabulary: Behavior and Personality (Answer Key)

Considerate – thinks about the feelings of other people

Respectful – polite to people

Disrespectful – rude or not polite

Energetic – active or has a lot of energy

Aggressive – ready to fight or argue

Impatient – does not like to wait

Patient – can wait calmly

Shy – quiet and not comfortable talking to people

Introverted – shy or likes to be alone

Outgoing – likes to be with people and talk to people

Kind – gentle, nice

Clever – intelligent and learns quickly

Well-spoken – speaks well and politely

Helpful – likes to help other people

Bored – not interested

Distracted – does not pay attention to a task

Obedient – follows rules or instructions

Disobedient – does not follow rules or instructions

Vocabulary: Behavior and Personality

_____ : thinks about the feelings of other people

_____ : polite to people

_____ : rude or not polite

_____ : active or has a lot of energy

_____ : ready to fight or argue

_____ : does not like to wait

_____ : can wait calmly

_____ : quiet and not comfortable talking to people

_____ : shy or likes to be alone

_____ : likes to be with people and talk to people

_____ : gentle, nice

_____ : intelligent and learns quickly

_____ : speaks well and politely

_____ : likes to help other people

_____ : not interested

_____ : does not pay attention to a task

_____ : follows rules or instructions

_____ : does not follow rules or instructions

Listen: A Short Parent-Teacher Conference

Listen and fill in the blanks.

Parent: Good evening! Are you Mr. Jones?

Teacher: _____! Yes, I am.

Parent: I'm Jane Corley, Holly's _____.

Teacher: Nice to meet you. Please, have a seat.

Parent: How is Holly doing in _____?

Teacher: Pretty well! Overall, Holly is a _____ student. She is good at _____, and she's always well-behaved. She's polite and respectful.

Parent: Is there anything she should improve?

Teacher: She just needs help in _____.

Parent: What do you suggest?

Teacher: Read to her at home. Take her to the _____. There are a lot of good children's books there. Ask her to read to you.

Parent: That sounds good. We'll do that.

Teacher: Great!

Parent: _____!



Listen: A Short Parent-Teacher Conference

Listen and fill in the blanks.

Parent: _____! Are you Mr. Jones?

Teacher: Hello! Yes, I am.

Parent: I'm Jane Corley, Holly's mother.

Teacher: _____. Please, have a seat.

Parent: How is Holly doing in class?

Teacher: Pretty well! Overall, Holly is a good student. She is good at math, and she's always well-behaved. She's _____ and _____.

Parent: Is there anything she should improve?

Teacher: She just needs help in _____.

Parent: What do you suggest?

Teacher: Read to her at home. Take her to the _____. There are a lot of good children's books there. Ask her to _____.

Parent: That sounds good. We'll do that.

Teacher: Great!

Parent: _____!



Questions and Comments for Parent-Teacher Conferences

Before the conference

Ask your child:

1. How is everything at school?
2. Which subjects do you like?
3. Which subjects are difficult? Why?
4. Is there anything you want me to ask the teacher?

Prepare:

1. make a list of questions
2. bring a notebook and a pen
3. arrive a little early

At the conference

Ask the teacher:

1. How is my son/daughter doing in school?
 - a. What is he/she doing well in?
 - b. Does he/she need to improve in anything?
2. How is his/her behavior?
3. Does he/she get along with the other students?
4. What can I do to help my son/daughter learn?
5. What's the best way to get in touch with you if necessary?

Tell the teacher:

1. My son/daughter really likes _____.
(reading/singing/drawing/numbers/soccer)
2. My son/daughter has problems _____.
(sleeping/studying/controlling his or her emotions)
3. There is a change in the family situation.
(divorce/new sibling/death of a family member)

Parent-Teacher Conference Sentence Strips

Parent: Good evening! I'm Edith Tanner, Mason's mother.

Teacher: Hi, I'm Ms. Jenkins, Mason's teacher.

Parent: How is Mason doing in class?

Teacher: Mason's doing well! He's learning fast and he gets along well with the other kids.

Parent: I'm glad to hear. Does he follow instructions?

Teacher: Yes, he always follows directions!

Parent: I'm glad he follows instructions. Does he work well in groups?

Teacher: Oh yeah.

Parent: I'm glad to hear. How can I help Mason improve?

Teacher: Ask him what he learned in class every day. Talk about school. Do you usually help him with his homework?

Parent: Sometimes... I don't know how to do his math homework, though!

Teacher: That's okay. It's still important that you encourage him and remind him to do his homework every night. There are many resources if his homework is difficult.

Parent: What kind of resources?

Teacher: Notes from the class, the textbook, or even the internet. He can also meet with a friend from the class to do the homework together. He can also come talk to me anytime.

Parent: Great. I will share those ideas with him next time he needs help.

Teacher: Do you have any other questions?

Parent: I don't think so. Thank you for meeting with me! This was very helpful.

Teacher: Take care.

Suggestions for Parents

Read the problems and make suggestions for the parents.

Juan's daughter is having problems with her algebra class. She says the work is very hard. Juan wants to help, but he didn't study algebra and he doesn't understand the work, either.
What are some ideas for Juan?

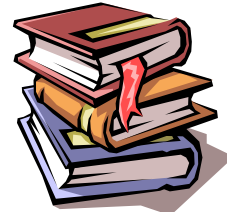


1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Ling cannot read in English. Her son Lee is in first grade. Her son's teacher says she should read a book with her son every night.
What are some ideas for Ling?

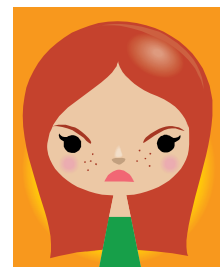


1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Janet's daughter does not like school. Her daughter feels bad every day when she has to go. Sometimes she behaves badly in the afternoon because she is unhappy.
What are some ideas for Janet?



1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Practice: A Parent-Teacher Conference

Parent: Good evening! I'm _____, _____ mother/father.
(name) (child's name)

Teacher: Hi, I'm _____.
(teacher's name)

Parent: How is _____ doing in class?
(child's name)

Teacher: _____ is doing _____!
(child's name) (well/badly)

Parent: Okay. Does he/she follow instructions?

Teacher: _____.
(Yes/No)

Parent: Okay. Does he/she work well in groups?

Teacher: _____.
(Yes/No)

Parent: That's good to know. How can I help _____ improve?
(child's name)

Teacher: _____.
(suggestion)

Parent: _____.
(Thank you.)

Teacher: Do you have any other questions?

Parent: I don't think so. Thank you for meeting with me! This was very helpful.

Teacher: Take care.

Practice: A Parent-Teacher Conference

Parent: Good evening! I'm _____.

Teacher: Hi, I'm _____.

Parent: How is _____ doing in class?

Teacher: _____!

Parent: _____. Does he/she follow instructions?

Teacher: _____

Parent: _____

Teacher: _____.

Parent: _____. How can I help _____ improve?

Teacher: _____.

Parent: _____.

Teacher: _____.

Parent: _____.

Teacher: Do you have any other questions?

Parent: I don't think so. Thank you for meeting with me! This was very helpful.

Teacher: Take care.