



Healthy Talks With Teachers

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Creating a regular dialogue between you and your child's teachers is a crucial part of his or her academic success. Teachers need your involvement, which will help your child master the skills and knowledge needed to become academically fit.

This school year, talk with your child's teachers and administrators about higher academic standards. Ask questions at parent meetings, school board meetings or school site council meetings; or call to arrange a convenient time to talk. Make sure teachers know how important you think higher academic standards are to your child's education. But understand that while teachers can answer questions about the academic expectations in your child's classroom, teachers do not set academic standards. In most cases, academic standards are established by the state or local school district, with the participation of educators and community members.

The more involved you are in your child's education, the more successful schools will be in helping him or her learn the necessary skills and knowledge. The following are questions to ask your child's teachers, parent-teacher organizations and administrators about higher academic standards. The answers will help you gauge your child's academic progress and his or her school's progress in achieving higher academic standards.

5 Categories of Questions to Ask Your Child's School

Questions about Standards

- What skills and knowledge will my child be expected to master this year?
- What is my child expected to learn this year in key subjects like math, science, history and English?
- Are there challenging academic standards in place at this school, and how do they compare with other school districts? May I see them?
- How do teachers inform students about the academic standards they're expected to meet?
- What kind of projects and assignments are in place to help my child meet higher academic standards?

Questions about Assessment

How will my child be evaluated?

What kind of information do teachers use to evaluate students, their learning and whether they're academically ready to move on to the next grade?

How are grades determined in your classroom?

Will my child be able to take new national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math when they become available in 1999?

Questions about Parent Involvement

What can I do to stay more involved in my child's academic progress?

What can I do at home to complement what is happening in the classroom?

How can I know on a daily basis what homework has been assigned?

How can I support teachers' efforts in implementing higher academic standards?

Questions about Accountability

How do you accommodate differences in learning?

What if my child is a slow learner and falls behind, or is a fast learner and is bored?

Are summer school, tutoring or other programs available for students who need more help?

Questions about Application

How are students prepared for further learning after high school?

What learning opportunities exist outside the classroom to make learning more relevant to what happens in the real world?

Are children encouraged to think about a wide variety of career interests?

Are all students encouraged to take algebra by the end of 8th grade?

Some additional questions to ask if your child is in high school:

Are all students encouraged to take rigorous courses that give them the option to go on to post-secondary education?

What Advanced Placement (AP) classes are available, and what percentage of students take them?

Does my child have to pass a test to graduate from high school? What grade level does the test measure?

Source: US Department of Education