

A parent newsletter from the administrative team at GMS

Tips for a Great Parent-Teacher Conference

Research shows convincingly that parent involvement has a critical effect on children's learning, attitudes about school and aspirations. When parents and teachers work together, they can make an unbeatable team. Parent-teacher conferences help build on that team.

At Gateway, we have designed our parent-teacher conferences to give you a short-time to meet with each of your child's teachers to discuss their performance. Because each teacher has a caseload of about 150-180 students, our conferences should run about five minutes each (English classes that are two periods in length may take about ten minutes). The following are some great tips to help you optimize the time you spend with your student's teachers.



Before the conference...

- **Write down questions** you want to discuss.
- **Talk with your child** about the fact that you have a meeting with his or her teacher. Ask the child if he/she has any concerns. Discuss what the child feels are his/her successes, likes and dislikes about school. Ask if there are any concerns or questions you should discuss with the teacher.
- **Review your student's LMS online grades.** Because teachers have a large amount of students, individualized emails about test retakes or incomplete assignments can be cumbersome. However, many of our teachers embed notes, comments and suggestions into the electronic grade book; this is one of the most successful and timely methods of communications teachers use! It's also a great way for you to monitor your student's success- it also gives you the teacher's recommendation or suggestions so you can help your student to be more successful in class!
- **Be prepared to talk *and* listen during the conference.** Middle school is different now than it was years ago! Find out what happens in the classroom, what the systems are that teachers have in place to help set your student up for success, and what is happening in the classroom daily. Ultimately, strong three-way communication between you, your student and the teacher will help them to be successful.

At the conference...

- **Conferences are held in the auxiliary gym** (that's the second gymnasium behind the main gym). Upon arriving at the Aux Gym, the counseling staff will have a table at the door where you can pick up your student's most recent progress report. This will have your student's current grades in each of his/her classes. You can use this to help guide your decision about to whom you would like to speak first.
- **Arrive on time and stay only for the amount of time scheduled.** Teachers are staying for the afternoon session from 1:00-3:45 pm. They will return for the evening sessions at 5:00 pm, with their last conference ending at 7:45 pm. If you arrive at 7:30 pm, you need to understand that you may not be able to visit with all of your student's teachers that night.

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Tips for A Successful Parent-Teacher Conference, con't.

Again, each teacher can commit **approximately five minutes per student**; if important questions have not been discussed, ask for a future appointment. Teachers would be happy to schedule a separate conference (or even a phone conference) if you need more time to discuss or meet about your student. Just let them know, and they can help to set something up. Overstaying your allotted time can put the teacher in an awkward position with other parents.

- **Take notes** about the discussion during the conference to review with your child.
 - **Ask the teacher** for his/her views on needed improvements.
 - **If your child needs additional help, ask about our interventions!** We have a lot of interventions during lunches and after school if your student is in need.
- Follow up on any plan of action** agreed to by you and your child's teacher. Stay in touch with the teacher. If you think of additional questions later, send a note or leave a message at the school for the teacher to call you.

After the Conference...

Discuss with your child what was said during the conference. Be sure to emphasize any positive comments the teacher made. As students get older, it becomes increasingly more important for them to take ownership of their learning. Even though parents/guardians are still a critical part of our team, we also want to continue to foster the development skills of self-advocacy and responsibility.

Talk with your child about strategies for improvement in academic areas and about other topics such as discipline issues, school activities that might interest your child, work habits, getting along with classmates ~ whatever topics were discussed during the conference.

Use this as a chance to praise your child (for a project, an activity or just for helping you prepare for the conference) and to demonstrate interest in your child's life.

If I need more time...

If you did not get a chance to meet with a teacher, *or* you need more than the five-minute conference time allotted at this event, please contact your student's teacher via email or phone to schedule an appointment for an additional conference or a phone conference.

GMS Main office phone
425-385-6600

To assist us in accommodating our 900 students, we schedule conference dates by student last name.

Last Name A-L Monday, 10/23/17 1:00-3:45 pm and 5:00-7:45 pm

Last Name M-Z Wednesday, 10/25/17 1:00-3:45 pm and 5:00-7:45 pm

In the event that you are unable to come on your designated date, you are welcome to attend on the other date.

Guardian Voices: How Student Voice Is Helping to Shape Gateway

This year, we are calling on our eighth grade students to help provide feedback regarding important school topics via our Guardian Voices student focus groups. Each month, we are inviting twelve eighth students to sign-up and participate in a student focus group on a specific topic that impacts students here at Gateway. Guardian Voices is facilitated by Mrs. Boten and Mrs. Spear and is a great opportunity for students to provide meaningful feedback with the potential to effect change at Gateway.

Our first Guardian Voices student panel was a great success! We had fifteen eighth grade students meet to discuss our current dress-code. All student participants believed that there should be a dress code and that students should wear clothes that are appropriate for school. They also provided thoughtful suggestions in relation to our current policy specifically when talking about current fashion trends. We were able to present the suggestions from our Guardian Voices focus group to our Instructional Leadership Team comprised of teacher leaders, earlier this month. We feel confident in presenting these suggested changes to our staff in November.

Our next Guardian Voices student focus group is going to address homework. We hope to hear from a diverse group of eighth grade students, so please encourage your student to sign-up for at least one of our focus groups throughout the school year.



Capital projects updates

The district is hard at work on many projects approved by voters in April 2016. Design work has been completed on both the [North Middle School modernization](#) and new [Elementary 18](#). Both projects will break ground this spring. Check out the videos and more updates at www.everettsd.org/capitalprojects.

At GMS, we would like to thank our voters for our 2016 capital bond and levy that helped to pay for our beautiful new roof and HVAC system! We appreciate your support of our schools!

North Middle School



Elementary 18



HALLOWEEN EXPECTATIONS

At Gateway, we strive to have a climate that is welcoming and inviting to all students. We also focus on having a rigorous academic environment where each student is continually challenged. Because of these goals, we ask that all students who choose to participate in Halloween, keep their costumes at home on 10/31 and the days leading up to 10/31. This means:

- No costumes of any kind on 10/31
- No masks, wigs, face paint or other costume-like accessories

Thank you for your help and support in making Gateway a great place for all students! We hope you have a great end to your October!

Website = tools for you

The website has tools to make your life easier. Sign in to:

- Customize a personal profile in *MyView*
- Add your student's school and teachers' calendars to your calendar view
- Filter calendar items by category
- Export calendar items to your personal calendar
- Access *Grades & More*, lunch menus and staff contact information from the home page

Find directions and maps to event locations listed on the calendar

If you are a parent or guardian authorized to have Web access to your student's records, you can sign in to the website using the same login and password you use for online grades to customize *MyView*. Need a login or not sure if you have access? Contact LMS@everettsd.org for help.

New communication plan of low and negative lunch balances

Food and Nutrition Services wants all students to have a positive meal experience and makes an effort to minimize identification and individual impact for a student with insufficient funds in-hand or in their account. To support this effort we will no longer communicate negative balances with students, only with parents.

We will use the following tools:

- On Tuesday and Thursday evenings, negative balance phone calls and e-mails will be sent through the district communication system.
- On Sunday evening, a low balance phone call and e-mail will be sent through the district communication system.

Students who ask for a "reminder" will be given a green envelope from the kitchen staff at lunchtime to take home when a balance is getting low.

Parents can sign up with *MyPaymentsPlus.com* for free. By setting up an account parents will be able to:

- Check account balances
 - View transaction history
 - Set up low balance notifications
- Make payments online

We appreciate your help to ensure that all students have a positive experience during breakfast and lunch.