



## PIRCCA PRESS

Parent Information and Resource Center of Central Alabama, a project of the Alabama Parent Education Center

### Volume 2.4 **How Can I Get the Most out of Parent Teacher Conferences?** Summer 2005

Parents help children succeed by working with teachers and schools to make sure they provide curricula and use teaching methods that are based on strong scientific evidence about what works best in helping children learn.

Many teachers say that they don't often receive information from parents about problems at home. Many parents say that they don't know what the school expects from their children—or from them. Sharing information is essential, and both teachers and parents are responsible for making it happen.

- ★ Set up a conference early in the school year. Let the teacher know that you are interested in your child's education and that you want to be kept informed of his progress. If English is your second language, you may need to make special arrangements, such as including in the conference someone who is bilingual.
- ★ If possible, also arrange to observe the teaching in your child's classroom. Afterward, talk with the teacher about what you saw and how it fits with your hopes for your child and your child's needs.
- ★ Before a conference, write out questions you want to ask and jot down what you want to tell the teacher. Be prepared to take notes during the conference and ask for an explanation if you don't understand something.
- ★ Check report cards carefully for subject grades, attendance and conduct. Ask the teacher or school counselor for other kinds of information about your child's performance, such as test scores and teacher observations.
- ★ Talk with the teacher about your child's talents, hobbies, study habits and any special sensitivities he might have, such as concerns about weight or speech difficulties.
- ★ Tell the teachers if you think your child needs special help and about any special family situation or event that might affect your child's ability to learn. Mention such things as a new baby, an illness or a recent or an upcoming move.
- ★ Tell the teacher what kind of person you want your child to become and what values are important to you.
- ★ Ask the teacher for specific details about your child's work and progress. If your child has already received some grades, ask how your child is being evaluated.
- ★ Ask about specific things that you can do to help your child. At home, think about what the teacher has said and then follow up. If the teacher has told you that your child needs to improve in certain areas, check back in a few weeks to see how things are going.
- ★ Approach the teacher with a cooperative spirit. If you disagree with the teacher about an issue, don't argue in front of your child. Set up a meeting to talk only about that issue. Before that meeting, plan what you are going to say. Try to be positive and remain calm. Listen carefully. If the teacher's explanation doesn't satisfy you, and you do not think you can make progress by further discussion with the teacher, arrange to talk with the principal or even the school superintendent.



## **When are children eligible for school choice?**

Children are eligible for school choice when the Title I school they attend has not made adequate yearly progress in improving student achievement--- as defined by the state--for two consecutive years or longer and is therefore identified as needing improvement, corrective action or restructuring. Any child attending such a school must be offered the option of transferring to a public school in the district--including a public charter school--not identified for school improvement, unless such an option is prohibited by state law. No Child Left Behind requires that priority in providing school choice be given to the lowest achieving children from low-income families. As of the 2002-03 school year, school choice is available to students enrolled in schools that have been identified as needing improvement under the ESEA as the statute existed prior to the enactment of No Child Left Behind.

In addition, children are eligible for school choice when they attend any "persistently dangerous school," as defined by the individual state. Any child who has been the victim of a violent crime on the grounds of his or her school is also eligible for school choice.

## **How do parents know if their child is eligible for school choice?**

Under No Child Left Behind, school districts are required to notify parents if their child is eligible for school choice because his or her school has been identified as needing improvement, corrective action or restructuring. They must notify parents no later than the first day of the school year following the year for which their school has been identified for improvement.

States are required to ensure that school choice is offered as an option to parents in the event their child is attending a school that is "persistently dangerous" or has been the victim of a violent crime while on school grounds.

## **PIRCCA Is Here To Help**

In October 2003, the Alabama Parent Education Center won a Parent Information and Resource Center grant to open the **Parent Information and Resource Center of Central Alabama (PIRCCA)**. PIRCCA serves Montgomery, Coosa, Tallapoosa, Elmore County Schools and Tallassee City Schools.

We work closely with families in schools that have been identified as low performing to help parents and teachers raise student achievement. If PIRCCA is not in your school and you need help, contact our office.



### **PIRCCA**

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*“Parents Helping Parents Help Their Kids”*



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