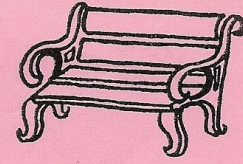


# The Park Bench School of Parenting

*Years ago parents got most of their child-rearing information from each other. Articles in the Park Bench School of Parenting are written to revive that custom. If you belong to a parents' group, use these articles as discussion starters. Or ask a friend what he or she would do in a similar situation. Listen to different viewpoints and decide for yourself what's best for your family.*



## Nine Ways to Connect with Your Child's Teacher

Getting to know your child's teacher is one of the most useful things you can do for your son or daughter. Children feel more relaxed at school when they see that the two of you are acquainted. Teachers can do a better job when you share your knowledge of your child. When you know what your child is doing in school, you can give specific encouragement at home. And if a problem does occur, it's easier to talk it over with a teacher you've come to know.

But teachers are clearly busy people. Nobody wants to distract them when they're with their students. So, how do you go about getting to know your child's teacher? Here are a few suggestions:

1. Whenever you see your child's teacher, whether it's before or after school or at a meeting, be sure to greet him or her. It's a simple thing, but smiling and saying hello is more than a courtesy. It establishes you as a friendly and approachable person.
2. Early in the year, mention that you're always interested in hearing how your child is doing. Let your child's teacher know the best way to reach you, whether it's by telephone at work or home, cell-phone, email, or written note in your child's back-pack.
3. Then find out how she'd like you to contact her and what the best time to do so is.
4. Teachers have many new names and faces to learn at the start of the year. Help them out. Even if you've introduced yourself before, tactfully mention your name the first few times you meet. If your last name is not the same as your child's, be sure to identify whose mom or dad you are.
5. If you're dropping off or picking up your child, make a passing comment about the weather or admire an interesting activity you see in the room. Every conversation doesn't have to be about how your child is doing! Talking about ordinary things can help you both feel comfortable with each other.
6. Ask what kind of parent involvement is welcomed at the school. Some teachers want parents' help in the classroom. Some need donations of inexpensive materials. Others might suggest something you can do at home or with the parents' group.
7. It used to be that parents always waited for the teacher to call them first. Not any more! A friendly phone call lets teachers know that your interest in two-way communication is genuine. It's best to keep such calls short, however. You might simply call to say that your child enjoyed a classroom activity or field trip.
8. Occasional short notes are helpful, too. Write about the new puppy at home, your child's nightmare last night, or her stomach-ache this morning. A few lines sent to school can make in a big difference in your child's day — and in building a sense of teamwork.
9. If your school has a parents' organization, join it. And, even when you're tired at the end of the day or it's hard to get a sitter, be sure to attend any open house, parent meeting or program that the school invites you to.