

## Teacher Conferences Important to Divorced or Divorcing Parents

In many parts of the country, the school year is ending in less than three months. What do you know about how well your child or children did in school this year? Will your offspring need to attend summer school, have a tutor or be ready to “graduate” to the next grade without any problems? Only your child’s teacher has the answer.

When parents are going through a divorce or are divorced, usually one of them has little knowledge about what is happening in their child’s classroom. Of course, most parents know that parent/teacher conferences are a great way for them to learn about their child’s daily activities in school, whether the child is doing well or if their child needs help at home. Yet, many parents don’t communicate with the teacher during this trying time in their lives, or just turn over this responsibility to the other parent.

However, if you are divorcing or divorced from your spouse abdicating educational responsibilities is not in the best interest of your child. So---what can you do to avoid conflict with your spouse, yet remain actively involved in your child’s education?

Brian James, president of C.E.L. & Associates, an Illinois-based certified mediator specializes in pre and post divorce issues has some advice for parents that can be beneficial to their child.

Make sure your child’s teacher is the first one informed that there is a pending divorce or if a divorce has just occurred. “Your child spends more time in school than anywhere else, and this situation might have a negative affect on your child,” he says. “At this time of year, most scheduled school conferences have past. However, all teachers are willing to have a conference with a parent at the parent’s request. Find out what is happening with your child.”

If the parents are cordial to each other, they can attend the parent/teacher conference together. That way, both parents have the same information and can ask the same questions regarding their child’s education. If only one parent attends, the other one is left in the dark. Unfortunately, in most divorce situations, this is exactly what happens.

More often than not, sitting together with a teacher is virtually impossible due to the antagonistic and negative vibes radiating from each parent. This makes the teacher uncomfortable-and in this hostile atmosphere-you may not receive all the information you need to know about your child’s academic achievements or non-achievements.

Therefore, James as some advice on how divorcing or divorced parents should handle teacher/parent conferences.

 Ask the teacher to notify both parents what days and times are available for in-person or phone conferences.

 When necessary, schedule individual in-person or phone conference time with the teacher. This will alleviate divorced parents from having to be together, but at the same time, allow them equal time with the teacher. This results in each parent learning the same information about their child.

 If only one parent is meeting the teacher in person or having a telephone conference, take notes. Even if you and your ex aren’t on speaking terms, sending him or her notes about the conference is in the best interest of your child. Both of you need to have the same philosophy and goals regarding your child’s education.

“No matter how much you and your ex dislike each other and want nothing to do with one another, you still have a child you need to parent together,” he says. “School is where children learn. If the two of you aren’t on the same page regarding the child’s current education, then you are both unnecessarily harming your child’s future education and well being.”

For more information, phone Brian James at (312) 524-5829 or visit [www.celandassociates.com](http://www.celandassociates.com).