

## 5 ways to start the year off right with your kid's teacher

How to be involved (but not pushy!), helpful (but not annoying!), and vocal (but in the best way). Let these experts teach you a thing or five.

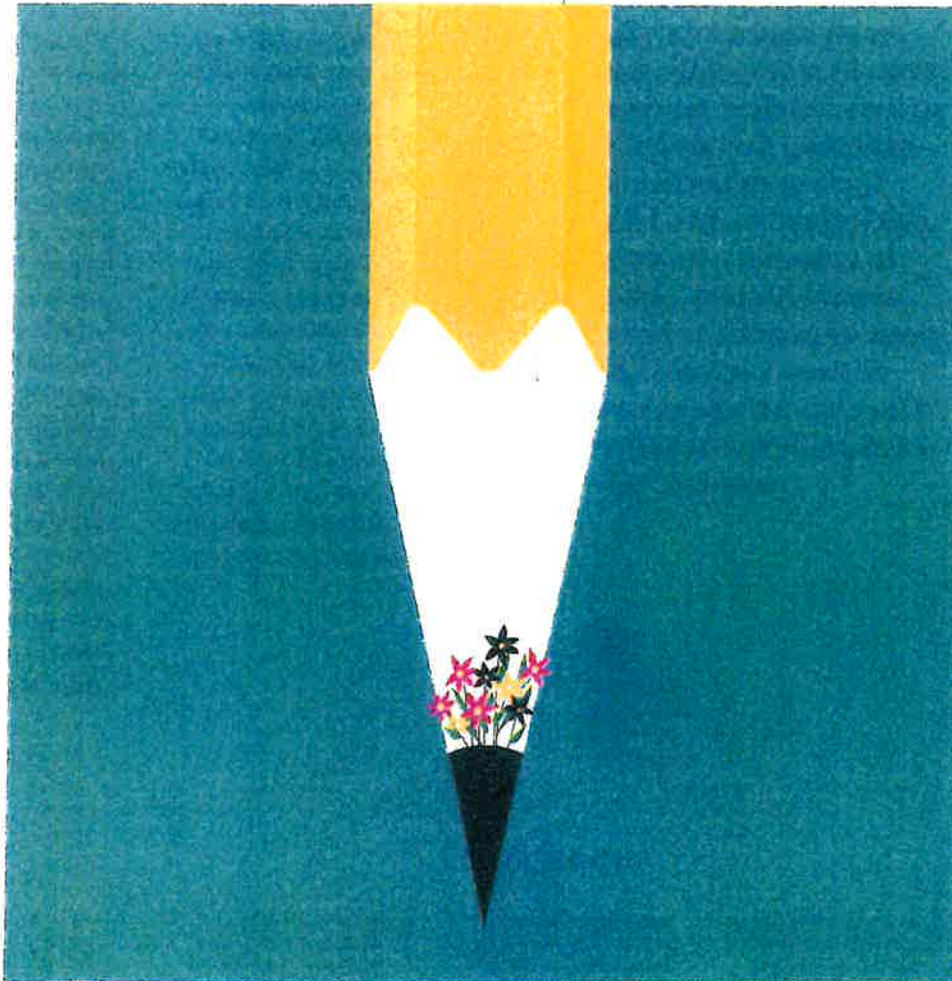
### 1

RON MARTUCCI

#### Be patient.

That first week, the kids are getting out of the summer routine and into the school routine, there's paperwork going back and

forth—it's hectic. If you haven't met your child's teacher before the first day and you are around at drop-off or pickup time, shake hands and say hello. It should be quick. Don't turn it into a conference and say, "Here's everything you need to know about my kid." I think it's better to give the teacher at least a week to develop a little relationship with your child and settle in. We know you have questions. But there's usually an open house at the school in the first two or three weeks. If you can wait, probably 90 percent of your questions will be answered there. After that, if there are still things you need to ask of or discuss with your child's teacher, go ahead and send an e-mail asking for a conference time. But also make sure to ask, "Is there anything I can help you with?"



Written by Claire Zulkey

Illustration by Ben Wiseman

## 2

ERIN DEALEY

**E-mail good things.**

Teachers tend to dread e-mails because, nine times out of 10, parents use them to complain. Don't just corner them on an issue or communicate when you have a question. Notice what's going well in the beginning of the year and let the teacher know. Send a note saying, "You know, Sam came home, and all he could talk about was the sharing time this morning. Thank you so much." A child's success is influenced by a positive relationship between parent and teacher. See the good and send a thank-you every once in a while.

**RON MARTUCCI** is the father of twin boys and a fifth-grade teacher at Colonial Elementary School, in Pelham, New York, where he lives.

3  
KRISTEN CHASE  
**Buy extra supplies.**

**There's a lot on the shopping lists you get from schools these days—more than just school supplies. There are tissues; there are wipes. I've heard fellow parents grumble about this, which is a bummer to me. Teachers work hard; they are dealing with our kids seven hours a day. But even in some of the best school districts, teachers still take money out of their own pockets to stock their rooms. I like to come in with extra, even if it's just a spare pack of pencils or box of tissues. I tell my kids, "Here, give these to your teacher for the 'whoever needs it' pile."**

**BE ON TIME**

Find tips for getting out the door at [realsimple.com/routine](http://realsimple.com/routine).

**ERIN DEALEY** has been a teacher for more than 30 years. Her latest children's book, *Babies Come From Airports*, is forthcoming. She lives in Northern California.

**KRISTEN CHASE** is a mother of four and the publisher, editor, and CEO of Cool Mom Picks. She lives in Philadelphia.

## 4

DONALYN MILLER

**Fill out the paperwork.**

Teachers send home a herculean amount. It's daunting, and parents are often overwhelmed. The best tip I can give is to sit down one night after dinner the first week and just power through it. Get it all turned in. Because the teacher has 25 kids in the classroom and ends up chasing the same ones for weeks. She can't turn in the whole stack until those last two are in! Put in a little extra time and focus on those forms. You will definitely decrease the teacher's stress level.

**DONALYN MILLER**, the author of *The Book Whisperer*, is a national ambassador for Scholastic Book Fairs and was a finalist for Texas Elementary Teacher of the Year in 2010. She lives in Fort Worth.

## 5

NADIA LOPEZ

**Be present.**

Some parents think their work is done once they select their children's school, but that's not the case. Participate in Parent-Teacher Association meetings; volunteer where you can. Our children are not being taught the same way many of us were, so make an appointment to sit in the classroom and experience the curriculum. If you're a writer, an entrepreneur, or a photographer, offer to do a workshop for the kids. That doesn't require an ongoing commitment. If children see that their parents have a great relationship with their teachers, there's a level of respect and a bond that develops for everyone. It allows for more success over the years to come.

**NADIA LOPEZ** is the founding principal of the Mott Hall Bridges Academy, in New York City, and the author of *The Bridge to Brilliance*. She lives in New York City.

## THE EXPERTS