

Student Led Conferences

Why student-led conferences?

Student Benefits

- Accountability for their learning
- Students learn to evaluate their own progress
- Students gain greater commitment to school work and learning
- Builds self confidence and self esteem
- Encourages student/parent communication
- Builds communication and critical thinking skills
- Places responsibility on the student and parent
- Allows students to become actively involved

Parent Benefits

- Increases the amount of information given to the parents
- Learn more about their student's learning and skills
- An opportunity to help their student set positive goals
- Active participant in their student's learning
- First language communication
- Eliminates standing in line waiting for a conference

Teacher Benefits

- Less stress on teachers, very relaxed atmosphere
- Less confrontational (more positive)
- Places responsibility on the student and parent
- Increased parent participation

How to get ready.

Be creative!

Set Conference Schedule and General Format

Design your conference format

List what you need and want to communicate to parents

Set the Agenda

Write up a script or procedure sheet.

Teacher Preparation

- Collect and save samples of student work
- Students complete a pre-conference self evaluation
- Students set goals for next quarter/year
- Teacher prepares invitation to parents (can be done as a team)
- Set up stations (learning, activity, sharing) and room arrangements
- Guest book/Sign-up for follow-up teacher conferences

School Preparation

- Inform and invite parents
- Share ideas among teachers

Student Preparation

- Discuss agenda and procedures ahead of time
- Discuss what students think their parents want to know
- Students complete scripts, evaluations, etc.
- Practice making introductions
- Role play – Practice conferencing with peers

Follow-up

Post Conference Activities (evaluations, etc.)

No Shows (What can be done to approach 100% participation?)

Program Evaluation (response survey)

Some Guidelines for Selecting Student Work

For Student Led Conferences

Student work should show:

Multiple skills and processes

Address state/local curriculum standards

Emphasize process as well as quality of product

Use examples of real work, not work contrived to “show”

Teacher Planning

Plan ahead to teach content standards with activities that demonstrate multiple skills and processes

Design work pieces that will demonstrate identifiable skills and processes addressed in your curriculum

☉ Set up a system for saving student work

☉ Inform students early what they will be sharing their saved work with their parents at conference time

☉ Be sure parents are well informed that student work will not be coming home and why

☉ Keeping a portfolio will allow parents to come in any time and view student work if they want – Be sure to invite them to do this

☉ Inform parents early in the year as to the new format and the benefits

☉ Help students evaluate their work and discover what the evidence tells them about who they are as learners

☉ Have students complete “Self reflection” statements or make comments about their learning on the larger projects or units

1. The focus on self reflection should be positive

2. Students will need guidance and modeling to do this activity – it is not something they do naturally

3. Don't overdo the use of self reflections

Final Selection of Work Pieces

☉ Teacher decides which specific work pieces he/she feels is a must

☉ Students select other work pieces given specific criteria by the teacher

** Select something that demonstrates....

** Select your favorite....

** This piece shows my research skills because...

** This piece shows that I had to solve a problem by

Teachers in the primary grades may want to put notes on various pieces to give parents some information

A table of contents might be useful as the students organize and put the final portfolio together

Make graphs showing performance on basic skills such as spelling or addition, subtraction, etc. This can tell more than a stack of work sheets or test papers.

Limit the number of items in the final SLC Portfolio.

Suggested Reading: Student Led Conferences

The following references are available at ESU#13. Call 308-635-0661:

Implementing Student-Led Conferences by Jane Bailey (371.26 Bai)

Student-Led Conferences by Janet Grant (371.26 Gra)

Using Portfolios to Share Learning with Parents by Janet Grant (371.26 Gra)

Student Led Parent Conferences by Linda Picciotto (371.27 Pic)

09-4819 Student Involved Conferences video by Dr. Rick Stiggins

Other references:

Bernick, R., Rutherford, B., & Elliot, J. (1991). *School and Family Conferences in the Middle Grades. School and Family Partnership series*. Hampton, NH: RMC Research Corporation.

Countryman, L. L., & Schroeder, M. (1996). When Students Lead Parent-Teacher Conferences. *Educational Leadership*, 53(7), 64-68.

Guton, J.M., & Fielstein, L. L. (1989). Student-Led Conferences: A Model for Teaching Responsibility. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, 24(2), 169-172.

Hackmann, D. G. (1996). Student-Led Conferences at the Middle Level: Promoting Student Responsibility. *NASSP Bulletin*, 80(578), 31-36.

Hackmann, D. G., Kenworthy, J., & Nibbelink, S. (1995, November). *Student-Lead Conferences: Encouraging Student-Parent Academic Discussions*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Middle School Association, New Orleans, LA.

Hackmann, D. G., Kenworthy, J., & Nibbelink, S. Student Empowerment Through Student-Led Conferences. *Middle School Journal*.

Kinney, Pat, & et al. *A School-Wide Approach to Student-Led Conferences: A Practitioner's Guide*. National Middle School Association.

Little, A. W., & Allan, J. (1989). Student-Led Parent-Teacher Conferences. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, 23(3), 210-218.

Paulson, F. L., & Paulson, P. R. (1994). *Student-Led Portfolio Conferences*.

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