Resource 8

Making Parent-Teacher Conferences Meaningful

Parent–Teacher Conferences are a good time to share information, develop personal relationships and welcome families into their child’s school life. Being prepared and having goals for the meeting can help the conference run smoothly for everyone.

Use these questions to gather information from families prior to the parent-teacher conference.

Should conferences be student led?

Teachers in New Mexico are beginning to have students lead parent-teacher conferences. Students are taught how to talk about what they have been working on, share their best work and improvement goals and address what assistance they need to make specific improvements in their schoolwork or behavior.

Should parents come prepared?

A parent-teacher conference can flow smoothly if parents know what to expect and what their role is. It is helpful for them to identify questions they want to ask and what kind of information they can share that would be helpful to the teacher. Parents should involve their children in this planning process.

What preparations should I make?

It is helpful to have at least two positive remarks to share about each student, actual student work, detailed information on grades and how the student can improve, specific feedback on student skills that need support and handouts on what parents can do at home to help. Prepare about two or three questions you would like to ask the family that would support the child. Ask about strategies they know work at home that you could apply in the classroom.

Families often appreciate information about topics of interest or concern to them. For example, middle school years are often challenging for parents and information on student self-perception, changes in the adolescent brain and what kind of boundaries parents need to set may be helpful for parents.

Planning for Parent-Teacher Conferences

On the following pages are some sample forms you can share with families at least two weeks before parent-teacher conferences. They can be used as a springboard for planning and discussion. Adapt them to suit your needs.
### Our Parent-Teacher Conference

Child’s Name: ____________________________ Parents Names: ____________________________

Teacher’s Name: ____________________________ Grade Level: ____________________________

Conference Date: ____________________________ Time: ____________________________

#### Things I Want To Talk About

Please fill this out before our meeting and bring it with you.

A. What I think my son/daughter does well at home:

________________________________________________________________________________________________

B. What I think my son/daughter does well at school:

________________________________________________________________________________________________

C. Questions I would like to ask:

________________________________________________________________________________________________

D. One issue I would like to discuss:

________________________________________________________________________________________________

#### About My Child

Ask your child what he or she would like to have you talk about or what he or she would like you to know.

1. Important things in my child’s life I think you should know about:

________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. Talk to your child. Ask him/her questions like: What do you like about school?

________________________________________________________________________________________________

What do you dislike about school? __________________________________________________________________

Is there anything you would like me to ask or tell your teacher?

________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. Other questions or concerns my spouse, partner or family members and/or I have:

________________________________________________________________________________________________
At the Conference

(Please read these questions to help you plan what questions you would like to ask at the conference.)

1. Is my child at grade level with his/her reading, writing and math?

2. May I see something my child has written?

3. May I see an example of grade level or excellent work?

4. What are my child’s strengths in class?

5. What are my child’s weaknesses in class?

6. Which content standards has my child achieved so far?

7. What do you expect from children in your class (behavior, work habits, etc.)?

8. What can I do at home to support you and my child in school?

9. How can I reach you if I have any questions or want ideas on how to help my child succeed in school?

10. Do we need to meet again? When will we meet?

After the Conference

1. Talk about it with your child. Praise your child’s strengths.

2. Decide how you will follow through with any plan that you and your child have agreed upon with the teacher.

3. Start a folder about your child. Include in it:
   - Report cards
   - Samples of work
   - Notes from the teacher
   - Test scores

4. Make a calendar and mark:
   - Meetings
   - Important events
   - Social events at your child’s school

5. Check your child’s class work and homework every day.

6. Keep talking with the teacher to discuss your child’s progress.
Action Plan:
Ways we can work together to ensure my child’s success.
(Do this with the teacher at the conference).

A. What the teacher will do at school:
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
B. What we will do at home:
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
C. How we will check our progress (notes, telephone call, e-mail, follow-up conference, etc.):
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________