Welcome to Nailing your First Parent Teacher Conference!

You will hear tips and review materials to conduct successful parent-teacher conferences.

You will explore proven practices and materials that you can download to assist you in creating the strongest relationship to deliver the best learning experience for each student.

Webinar Ground Rules...

- Phone lines will be muted during the meeting/webinar.
- Use Chat to submit questions while the presenters are sharing or Press *3 on your phone to ask a question live.
- Thank you for your professionalism and patience with the virtual meeting process!
Nailing your First Parent Teacher Conference

Agenda

Introductions
Peter Witzler, NEA Center for Organizing

Welcome
Rachel Immerman, Aspiring Educator Chairperson

P–T Conference Tips, Practices, and Kit
Andrea Giunta, NEA Teacher Quality

Questions & Answers
YOU and Andrea

National Education Association (NEA)
Thursday, October 11, 2018
7:00 p.m. (EST)
Nailing your First Parent Teacher Conference!

Andrea Giunta
Senior Policy Analyst
Teacher Quality
NEA Center for Great Public Schools
Washington, DC
Collect Student Work Products for a Portfolio
Collect and store in a file various items from different subjects that present completed independent work in class. Keep collecting through each school year. Eventually this portfolio will show great progress made. Invite the student to choose items in addition to your choices. At the end of the year, each student takes home this file.

Make Regular Student Progress Reports
Alert parents of excellent success or concerns you may have AT LEAST by MID QUARTER. Your school district may have a policy and standard form/process that you are required to follow. There should be no major surprises to parents either in above standard or below standard progress in either social or academic areas. Regular communication is important so that parents may enhance/support their child at home.

Organize and Prepare
Older students may complete a survey, notate data for each student by: subject, strengths, teacher concerns, missing assignments. Utilize constructive feedback, prepare your files to document the discussion and any solid agreements made, i.e., 10 minute sight word practice each night for 4 weeks. The documentation is for YOU and may or may not require signatures.

Provide Handouts to Parents on Suggested Supportive Activities for Home

Prepare Printed Materials that make Requests or Inform All Parents prior and after the conference

* Additional Suggested Parent Home Activities provided in P–T Kit
P–T Conferences Tips

Remember that Parent–Teacher Conferences are JUST ONE Component of ongoing home–to–school communication and family involvement in your classroom. These tips are for you to utilize, not to make more work for you, but to help you successfully engage parents in their children’s education.

- Disseminate information about conferences through flyers, notes, phone calls, community meetings, and on line scheduling. Include the upcoming dates, goals of the conferences, and alternative options for scheduling in your invitations. Be sure to be knowledgeable to language needs (sign language, second languages in print and spoken word, and religious holidays).

- Go over student data, assignments, and assessments but also ask parents what they would like you to know about their son or daughter. Think of what more you would like to learn about your students. **NUMBER 1 QUESTION:** What is your biggest hope for your child?

- Prepare your thoughts and materials using some of the items from our kits or just make a list of key items of discussion on each students' progress and growth. Use the student portfolio to demonstrate the strengths in students’ work and what you would like to see in the future as s/he continues in the school year (district benchmarks, standards, skill mastery requirements).

- Send Reminders Home a week before the conferences & Create a Welcoming Environment. Make sure you have current student work up in class, position adult sized chairs in a circle in a private space. Perhaps you can have chairs set up in the hall (with the classroom door locked) available for people to use while waiting. Inquire to your Grade Level Chair or Mentor what is the school’s process to support student privacy regarding siblings in conferences.
Approaching Parent–Teacher Conferences

❖ Two–way Conversation
This is not only an opportunity for parents to learn from you. No one knows your students better than their families. Their insights to the child’s strengths and needs, learning styles, and extracurricular activities can inform and improve your instructional methods. Your efforts to better understand their perspectives and aspirations make parents feel respected and help build trust in the parent–teacher relationship.

❖ Emphasis on Learning
Make all events and communication, not just P–T Conferences, to **FOCUS OF LEARNING**. Discuss strategies to support student learning and communicate that you want to work with parents to always have students move forward in their growth and development. Parents will develop trust and respect in your expertise, knowing that you care about their child’s progress. Every accomplishment and struggle is an opportunity for the child to progress and you are actively involved in that process. This is why teaching is SO exhausting.

❖ Opportunities and Challenges
Everyone needs praise and constructive criticism to grow. All parents are proud of their children and need to hear about their strengths and struggles from you. This demonstrates that you VALUE the unique strengths of their child and have high expectations for the child’s ability to succeed in school and in life.
Discuss Progress and Growth
Lead with the positive and let parents know their child’s ability level in different subjects using the district’s curriculum and measurement tools. Let parents know how their child’s performance relates to his or her peers (i.e., the average third grader should be able to complete x basic addition and subtraction facts in one minute). Help parents understand the data to demonstrate progress against district learning goals and identify areas that need to be addressed.

Use Examples
Walk parents through the assignments and assessments that particularly demonstrate the student’s progress and abilities.

Ask Questions and Listen Actively
Ask parents about their hopes and dreams for their child. Solicit input into the student’s strengths, needs, learning styles, and non-school activities. Look at them in the eyes as they speak and don’t write notes to yourself until they are finished speaking, if notes are needed.
Ideas for During P–T Conferences continued...

- **Share Ideas for what can be done at home**
  Suggest activities and strategies families can do at home to help their child learn and grow.

- **Seek solutions collaboratively**
  Avoid judgements about what “they” should do and instead emphasize how “we” can work together to resolve any issues.

- **Make an Action Plan**
  Spend the last few minutes talking about how you and the family will support the student. Be specific about the kinds of things you will do, for how long you will do them, and how will you check in with each other about progress.

- **Establish Lines of Communications**
  Describe how you will communicate with families (i.e., notes home, phone calls, email, etc.) and how they contact you. Schedule a way to follow up on your conference in 4 to 5 weeks.
Ideas for after P–T Conferences

- **Follow Up**
  Contact via phone (if possible) or with a note and thank them for meeting with you. Ask if they have further questions or concerns. Send home any supportive materials that can support leaning at home (flash cards). Contact parent who did not attend and offer alternative ways to communicate.

- **Communicate Regularly**
  On an on-going basis, communicate positive news as well as updates on progress and challenges. Stick to what you agreed to do during the conference. Let parents know about workshops and meetings going on at the school that will be supportive.

- **Connect In–Class Activities**
  Create responsive instructional practices based on what you learned about family cultures, home learning environments, and student strengths and needs.
Tip #1: Know your students (not just their academics)

The note from Mrs. F. came home two weeks into the school year:
I'd like to talk with you about how we can make reading time more challenging for Ruby. When can we meet?

Although I knew my daughter was an advanced reader, I had accepted that it would always be up to me to ask for this kind of differentiation. The conversation had never been initiated by the teacher.

Thus began my year of absolutely loving Mrs. F.

I know a lot of teachers, and I know that a lot of their energy goes into things like setting up classrooms, finding new materials and activities, learning new technology, and downloading beautifully designed templates and worksheets. All of that is good and important: The more efficiently your class is run, the more hands-on your activities are, the more welcoming your classroom is, the better the year will be.

But all of that pales in comparison to this one thing. The thing you could do in a bare cinderblock room with no electricity and no more technology than a stick for writing in the dirt floor. The one thing a teacher can do that makes a bigger difference than all those other things combined:

Know my child.

Link to full article: www.bit.ly/knowmychild
**Tip #1: Know your students**

- Take anecdotal notes throughout the day if you notice something especially thoughtful, kind, or anything else that defines their personality. Lead with these notes.

- Have “lunch bunches” or any kind of outside interaction with students whenever possible. This is where you can really learn who they are.

- Keep a “Deep Data Chart” of student interests, hobbies, etc. (sample chart in folder)
Tip #2: Come OVER–prepared

- Allow parents to send in questions or concerns prior to the conference. This allows them time to reflect and time for you to prepare your answers. (forms for this in kit)

- Have any/all data readily available: report cards (if possible), interims, student work samples and exemplars.

- Have county/state benchmarks readily available as well.
Tip #3: Fill the room with resources

• Allow access/a tour of a classroom website. Have resources available on there.

• Prepare for siblings or for parents to bring their child with them! Make a “play station” in your room with (quiet) games, coloring pages, or books, or turn on your classroom computers to www.abcya.com or another online resource.

• Provide resources for parents to use at home with their children and spend time explaining them. (see kit for resource ideas)
In the Kit, you will find with resources to give to parents and use in your room:

- Sight word flashcards
- Math facts flashcards (all levels)
- Questions to ask children when reading at home
- Resources for understanding what their child is doing at school, and how it’s changed since they were in school.
Questions

For additional information on this webinar topic, please contact the NEA Early Career Educator Team

(pwitzler@nea.org)