

Phase One: CONSERVATIVE APPROACH

We would recommend that you take a conservative approach in moving toward a Student-Led Conference format. Starting steps might include:

1. Explaining to students what is going to change about the way conferences are currently done; let them know that you will all work together.
2. Explaining to students the portfolio process; what it is and how it will work. Give them ideas of what schoolwork should go into their portfolios.
 - *Helpful hint:* A good portfolio progresses from an initial collection of school work to a reflection of the work. Work samples show progress towards students reaching their goals.
 - *Helpful hint:* Try designating a place at the beginning of the year where student portfolios can be kept so students have access to them. Set up a daily routine by having students put their work in their portfolio at a given time.
3. Helping students pick out one or two artifacts from their portfolios to share with their families and classmates.
 - *Helpful hint:* Primary grades may need extra instruction on how to choose an artifact and how to file their work.
4. Communicating with parents on what they can expect to see from their student during conferences and/or by the end of the grading period.
5. Encouraging students to attend conferences.
6. At the conference, encouraging students to introduce their parents.
7. Inviting students to reflect on their work – why they received the grade(s) they did, what they would do differently, how this lesson applies to other classes or their daily lives.
8. Setting goals with students. Share those goals, along with updates on progress, with families.
9. Having students and parents reflect on the Student-Led Conference process. Note: Reflection Form sample is provided.

Phase Two: MODERATE APPROACH

Repeat all steps from Conservative Approach and add the following elements:

1. Having students collect several pieces of work over the course of the semester to share with classmates and families.
2. Teachers may want to have a folder of their own. This may include such things as: major assignments with rubrics, a benchmark piece, grade sheet, etc.
3. Teacher commentary on student work and classroom artifacts.
4. Allowing students to write invitations and thank you cards to family members who attended.
5. Providing opportunities for students to tell the story of their learning through a variety of mediums (writing, verbal, artistic).
6. Providing parents with a list of leading questions.

7. During the first half of the conference the teacher should observe and encourage the student to keep focused on their script (if necessary). During the last half, the teacher shares the child's grade information, addresses any concerns, and clarifies any questions the parent might have.
8. Introducing Student-Led Conferences through professional development sessions, Leadership Team and Family Engagement Team meetings.

Phase Three: AGGRESSIVE APPROACH

It sounds like you're ready to pursue Student-Led Conferences! We would recommend that you take an aggressive approach to implementation, which includes all elements from the Conservative Approach and the Moderate Approach as well as the following steps:

1. Introducing the benefits of Student-Led Conferences to the Leadership Team and any personnel who might be involved in the implementation process.
2. Visiting other schools implementing Student-Led Conferences.
3. Ensuring commitment and support from administrative staff.
4. Creating a consistent plan for your building. Note: Planning Worksheet sample included.
5. Connecting with your Family Engagement Team in finding ways to educate, train, and involve families in the process of moving toward Student-Led Conferences.

Additional tips:

1. *Discuss with the student how to address a grade that's not up to par and what parents will want to know about it.*
2. *Share ideas with your co-workers. Ask what they are doing to transition. If someone is struggling with getting organized, another co-worker may have what you are looking for.*
3. *Instead of rehearsing individually with each student, have students get into groups and share with their classmates. During a math unit, they could pair up and share how they think they are doing in math, what they need help on, etc.*
4. *Model self-reflection for students- particularly younger ones.*
5. *Provide graphs to parents to show the student's performance on basic skills such as punctuation or addition, subtraction, etc. This will help parents have a visual.*