Parent-Teacher Conferences are the optimal platform to communicate with parents and students about areas of achievement and improvement.

Recognizing the District’s growing interest in Student-Led Conferences, this manual will help schools enhance their current conference arrangements while setting goals to transition to a Student-Led format.

This guide offers research-based best practices and practical application in a quick-read format.

Contents include:

- Training outlines
- Activities for total staff or small groups
- Forms and resources to complete trainings and activities
- Research index
“Parent-Teacher Conferences are bringing together the two most influential people in a student’s life,”
- excerpted from The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teacher Can Learn from Each Other by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot
Evaluation is a necessary part of any school’s Parent-Teacher Conference. Evaluating conferences is a valuable tool for schools to strengthen the quality of their Parent-Teacher Conferences as well as measure and improve outcomes.

Evaluation provides insight about a school’s Parent-Teacher Conference plan’s effectiveness. The data collected from evaluating conferences can be used to improve current practices. Conferences should be evaluated on a regular basis with both staff and families to ensure that they are as effective as possible.

An evaluation of your school’s Parent-Teacher Conferences can:

- Identify “what works” and “what does not work” with staff and families
- Improve staff’s frontline practice with families, which can lead to stronger relationships between schools and home
- Increase a school’s capacity to conduct a critical self-assessment and plan for the future.

Resources:

- Conference Reflection
- Post-Conference Family Survey
- Parent-Teacher Conference Sign-In Sheets
- Conference Attendance Survey Script and Worksheet
- Conference Attendance Feedback Activity
Reflecting On Your School’s Conferences

**Description:** Planning Meeting  
**Intended audience:** Principals, Leadership and/or Family Engagement Teams  
**Estimated Time:** 45-60 minutes  
**Materials Needed:**  
- Writing instruments  
- Chart paper  
- Form 1: Conference Reflection

1. Complete Conference Reflection form individually.  
2. Share out and discuss results.  
3. Discuss and plan what further professional development should be scheduled for school staff.

“Research proves that at Parent-Teacher Conferences teachers worry they’ll be charged with not doing enough for the child, while parents fret about hearing criticisms from someone who doesn’t yet know them or their kid. As a result, both parties too often leave conferences feeling dissatisfied. Planning ahead for effective conferences ensures positive interactions between families and teachers,”

- excerpted from *The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teacher Can Learn from Each Other* by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot
## Post-Conference Family Survey

**Description:** Survey  
**Intended audience:** Families  
**Estimated Time:** 5 minutes to complete survey, 60 minutes for data compilation  

**Materials Needed:**  
- Form 2: Post-Conference Family Survey

We recommend that as many families as possible be invited to participate in a survey about their experiences at Parent-Teacher Conferences.

The survey included (form 1-D) is designed to be flexible to any school and grade level use. If your school wants to focus on an area not included in the survey provided, please feel free to customize or create a survey that will best suit your needs.

1. Determine which survey tool your school would like to use. The Post-Conference Family Survey provided (Form 2) may be an option or good starting point.

2. Establish when you will conduct the survey. It is recommended that the surveys are completed as soon after conferences as possible to ensure that the details are fresh in families’ minds.

3. Create a plan for distribution and collection of the surveys. Some options include:
   - Setting up tables during conferences and asking families to complete them after conferences are over.
   - Using an online survey service (like Google Docs) for survey completion. You can set up computers at conferences for families to use to complete the survey.
   - Sending surveys home the week of or the week after conferences and asking families to return them to the building.

4. Compile data from surveys collected. Give consideration to sharing results with both staff and families.
**Background information for surveying:**

Surveying a sample of parents regarding attendance at Parent-Teacher Conferences can help determine the value of conferences and what families talk with teachers about most. This can be especially beneficial when receiving feedback from families with struggling students (D-and-F List).

**Other helpful tips:**

To collect data by grade level, copy the survey onto different colored paper to distinguish one grade level from another. This method could also be used to distinguish between teams in middle and high schools.

To send the surveys home with students, consider having a reward for the class that returns the most or a small reward (pencil, sticker, etc.) for each student that returns the survey.

If you use an online service, don’t forget that many of the available sources automatically compile the information for you.

Examples of online survey tools:
- GoogleDocs
- Survey Monkey: www.surveymonkey.com

If you choose to do surveys on paper, you could manually input surveys into an online service for compilation.
## Targeted Conference Data Activity

### Description:
Data Collection Activity

### Intended audience:
Principals, Instructional Coaches, Data Leaders

### Estimated Time:
Varied, dependent on data

### Materials Needed:
- Compilation of names and phone numbers of students who have Ds or Fs from ESIS (can do by classroom, grade-level or for all-school)
- Phone lines
- Writing instruments
- Form 3: Parent-Teacher Conference Sign-In Sheets
- Form 4: Conference Attendance Survey Script and Worksheet
- Form 5: Conference Attendance Feedback Activity

1. Decide early in the school year to adopt the project to make organization easier.
2. Determine who will take the lead on the project and whether this will be a class, grade-level or all-school survey activity.
3. Before conferences, compile the names and phone numbers of students who had Ds or Fs for the grade period from ESIS.
4. Have teachers keep sign-in sheets for parents who attend.
5. Gather sign-in sheets and compare those in attendance with those on the D- and F compilation list.
6. Call parents on the D-and F-list and survey them with the Conference Attendance Survey Script and Worksheet.
7. Compile results.
8. As a team, plug results into Conference Attendance Feedback Activity.

“In a good parent-teacher conference, both parent and teacher learn something new about the child,”

— excerpted from “Better Parent-Teacher Conferences,” by Patricia Tanner Nelson, Ed.D.
**Conference Attendance Staff Activity**

**Description:** Professional Development

**Intended audience:** All Staff

**Estimated Time:** 15 minutes

**Materials Needed:**
- Paper for taking notes
- Writing Instruments
- Form 5: Conference Attendance Feedback Activity

1. Present data that was collected from the Conference Attendance Data Survey Activity (pg 8) to group.
2. Distribute Conference Attendance Feedback Activity form to group.
3. Review data in large-group or small-group settings.
4. Using the data, complete Conference Attendance Feedback Activity form in large-group or small group discussion.
5. Share out Conference Attendance Feedback Activity form results.

“A parent-teacher conference is one of the best ways to fulfill the adult needs for information, for reassurance and for practical advice – especially if it is planned and carried out to ensure clear communication,”

Enhancing Your Parent Teacher Conferences

**Section Features:**
- Professional development modules for staff on enhancing Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-Teacher Conferences should not be left up to chance. For many families, the time teachers and staff spend with them at Parent-Teacher Conferences will be the most significant and influential encounters of the year.

The time you spend planning what you do during conferences will reflect in the quality of the experience for the families and students of your classroom.

Planning for conferences should be ongoing. It should never be something that happens in the days or hours before a conference is to occur. Planning for what will be shared at conferences is as important, if not more important, than planning the logistics.

Teachers play a vital role in communicating a range of information to parents and should be equipped to discuss assessment data. Because of it’s importance, it is a good practice for schools to use a variety of communication platforms – including Parent-Teacher Conferences – to keep parents informed on an ongoing basis about State Assessments.

**Resources:**
- Conversations Not Presentations PowerPoint
- Conversations Not Presentations Note Taking Handout
- Post-Conference Family Survey
- School-Wide Planning Tool
- Mock Conference Scenario Script
- Language Support Handout
**Can We Talk?**

**Description:** Professional Development  
**Intended audience:** All Staff  
**Estimated Time:** 5-10 Preparation, 20-45min. PowerPoint and Discussion  

**Materials Needed:**  
- Projector and Screen  
- Computer  
- Chart stand and paper  
- Pencils or pens  
- Form 6a: Conversations Not Presentations PowerPoint  
- Form 6b: Conversations Not Presentations Note Taking Handout  

1. Introduce the topic of Parent-Teacher Conferences to staff. If you’d like, you can share some of the background information provided in this chapter.  
2. Using the provided PowerPoint Presentation and presenter notes (Conversations Not Presentations forms 6a & 6b), work with your staff through the presentation, pausing for discussion when indicated. If applicable, use a chart stand and paper to scribe.

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**Parent-Teacher Conference Modeling**

**Description:** Professional Development  
**Intended audience:** All Staff  
**Estimated Time:** 5-20 Preparation, 20-30 min. for discussion and materials review  

**Materials Needed:**  
- Props for a mock conference (table, chairs, etc.)  
- Form 7: Mock Conference Scenario Script  
- Form 8: Language Support Handout  
- Tools and planning materials selected for your school from either the included CD or website.  

1. Select two or three staff members to assist you with modeling Parent-Teacher Conferences. Let them know you’ll be demonstrating conferences that are less effective, and conferences that are more effective.  
2. Distribute Mock Conference Scenario Script instructions and follow. For schools that have a large non-English speaking population, hand out the Language Support Handout.  
3. Before resetting props for the next scenario, ask the staff to share out what things they saw that were wrong. Scribe answers.
Using Logistics to Enhance the Conversation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference School-Wide Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intended audience:</strong> All Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estimated Time:</strong> 30-45min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materials Needed:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart stand and markers available for scribing staff ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data results from the Post-Conference Family Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 9: School-Wide Planning Tool</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Divide staff into groups to complete the School-Wide Planning Tool. Possible configurations of groups could be: grade levels, specials, vertical alignment (one of each grade level in each group), primary, intermediate, etc.
2. If you have time, ask every group to complete all sections of the School-Wide Planning Tool. If time is limited, you could divide sections up for groups to complete.
3. Allow time for each group to share their ideas and or suggestions. Designate one person to compile the information onto one form.
4. If this activity was done without the entire staff present, determine a date to share final information back out with the rest of the staff (i.e. Staff Meeting, PD, In-service).
5. If major changes to conferences are included in your plans (for example, trying Student Led Conferences), determine a format to notify families of the changes.
Transition to Student-Led Conferences

Section Features:

- Needs assessment to rate readiness for Student-Led Conferences
- Application for piloting Student-Led Conferences

Background Information

Empowering students to take a more focal part in delivering information about their achievements to their parents during conferences has many benefits. Some of the benefits of Student-Led Conferences include:

- Students experience increased accountability for their academic performance
- Students are motivated to learn, which boosts state assessment scores and decreases discipline problems
- Increased student self-esteem and confidence in presentation skills
- Parents feel a greater sense of partnership with schools
- Parents attend conferences at a higher rate
- Teachers report an overall more meaningful conference experience.

What is a Student-Led Conference?

This conference format allows students to talk about their school work, describe their goals and discuss their plans for reaching their goals with their parents.

Teachers facilitate the conversation by guiding students to expound upon certain points and invite parents to offer feedback.

Transitioning to Student-Led

There is no one perfect way to implement this conference format. Schools that commit to implementing Student-Led Conferences will need to set realistic goals and expectations.

Additionally, leadership at these schools will have to devote professional development time to teaching the concepts behind this conference format and the steps necessary to equip teachers, students and parents to complete this conference format.

Genuine staff buy-in is critical in making this conference format successful.
### Assessing school readiness to transition

**Description:** Planning Meeting  
**Intended audience:** Principals, Leadership and/or Family Engagement teams  
**Estimated Time:** 45-60min.  
**Materials Needed:**  
- Chart paper  
- Writing instruments  
- SLC Form 1 Can We Talk SLC PowerPoint  
- SLC Form 2 Needs Assessment Survey  
- SLC Form 10 Phase Chart

1. Review Can We Talk SLC PowerPoint.  
2. Complete Needs Assessment individually.  
3. Share out and discuss results.  
4. Review Phase Chart.  
5. Discuss your school’s preferred phase designation based on the assessment results.  
6. Discuss what components of the preferred designation would be priorities.  
7. Chart responses.

### Determining readiness to pilot Student-Led Conferences

**Description:** Planning Meeting  
**Intended audience:** Principals, Leadership and/or Family Engagement teams  
**Estimated Time:** 30min. for discussion  
**Materials Needed:**  
- Chart paper with grade-level or total staff feedback  
- Completed Needs Assessment (Form 13)  
- SLC Form 11 Pilot Site Criteria Checklist  
- SLC Form 12 Pilot Site Application

1. Complete Pilot Site Criteria Checklist.  
2. Compare results with completed Needs Assessment worksheet.  
3. Discuss whether to proceed or not with requesting consideration to become a pilot site.  
4. Follow instructions for Pilot Site Application if appropriate.
Evaluating Your Conferences
Conference Reflection
Post-Conference Family Survey
Parent-Teacher Conference Sign-in Sheets
Conference Attendance Survey Script and Worksheet
Conference Attendance Feedback Activity

Enhancing Your Conferences
Conversations Not Presentations PowerPoint
Conversations Not Presentations Note Taking handout
Mock Conference Scenario Script
Language Support Handout
School-Wide Planning Tool

Transitioning to Student-Led
Can We Talk SLC PowerPoint
Needs Assessment
Phase Chart
Pilot Site Criteria Checklist
Pilot Site Application

Additional Resources