Parent-Teacher Conferences

Wichita Public Schools

A fast-paced 'how-to' guide for administrators and educators

Parent-Teacher Conferences

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 guide will help schools enhance their current conference arrangements while setting goals to transition to a Student-Led format.

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

Contents include:

- Professional development modules
- Activities for total staff or small groups
- Forms and resources to complete trainings and activities
- Resource index

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Table of Contents

This guide and its supporting documents are featured in this guide are available on the WPS Family Engagement Portal → Parent-Teacher Conferences

"Parent-Teacher Conferences are bringing together the two most influential people in a student's life," – excerpt from *"The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn From Each Other"* by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot
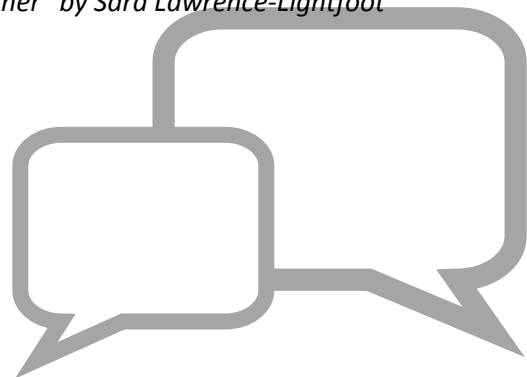
Effective conferences often begin with intentional planning to prepare staff and families. The following resources aim to assist schools tackle logistics, collect input from students about their performance and offer strategies to families and staff to help better prepare for conferences. Feel free to customize for your school's particular needs or to meet time constraints.

Effective Conferences PowerPoint	
Description: Professional Development that features basic tips for staffs to consider to improve the quality of conferences.	1. Use background information and quotes provided in this chapter regarding the power of Parent-Teacher Conferences to introduce PD.
Intended Audience: All Staff	
Location on WPS Family Engagement Portal: Parent-Teacher Conferences→ Pre-Conference → Traditional	2. Use the provided PowerPoint Presentation presenter notes to work through the presentation, pausing for discussion when indicated.
Duration of activity: 20 minutes	
Materials Needed: Projector and Screen Computer Writing instruments Effective Conferences PowerPoint Effective Conferences Notetaking Handout	PD

Cross-Cultural Conferencing PowerPoint	
Description: Professional Development that features in-depth information for conferencing using interpreters.	1. Use the provided PowerPoint Presentation presenter notes to work through the presentation, pausing for discussion when indicated.
Intended Audience: All Staff	
Location on WPS Family Engagement Portal: Parent-Teacher Conferences→ Pre-Conference → Traditional	2. Distribute the Language Support Handout as a take-away resource
Duration of activity: 20 minutes	
Materials Needed: Projector and Screen Computer Writing instruments Cross-Cultural Conferencing PowerPoint Cross-Cultural Conferencing Notetaking Handout Language Support Handout	PD

Reflecting on Your School's Conferences	
Description: Planning Meeting	1. Work through School-Wide Planning Tool for Conferences OR Conference Guiding Questions individually or as a table-group
Intended Audience: Principals, Leadership and/or Family Engagement teams	
Location on WPS Family Engagement Portal: Parent-Teacher Conferences→ Pre-Conference → Traditional	2. Share out (scribe answers on chart paper as needed)
Duration of activity: 20 minutes	3. Decide how to share information with staff
Materials Needed: Writing instruments School-Wide Planning Tool for Conferences (for decisions affecting staff and families) OR Conference Guiding Questions (if focusing solely on decisions affecting families) Chart paper (optional)	

Additional Pre-Conference Resources	
Location: WPS Family Engagement Portal → Parent-Teacher Conferences → Pre-Conferences → Traditional	
27 Tips for Parent Conferences	Promising practices for parents and teachers in preparation for conferences.
My Conference Report- Elementary	A self-evaluation tool for elementary stduents to prepare for conferences.
The Challenge to Excel Student Self-Evaluation Tool	A self-evaluation tool for secondary students to prepare for conferences.
Parent Teacher Conferences Scheduling Forms – Spanish and English	A document teachers may complete to inform families of their conference times
Tip Card Reminders for Teachers	A quick-read tip card for teachers of best practices to establish and follow before-, during- and after conferences.
The Challenge to Excel	A self-evaluation tool for seondary students to prepare for conferences.
Communicating Assessments with Families PowerPoint (available on the WPS Family Engagement Portal → Assessments → Informing Families of Assessments) Please note: Additional Assessment-related resources are available that schools may customize to share with families during Parent-Teacher Conferences	A family-friendly PowerPoint presentation schools can use to explain assessments to families. The PowerPoint includes assessment terminology, reasoning for assessments, what parents can do to help their child and district and school assessment data.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Creating an inviting atmosphere that welcomes families and honors their input and feedback is critical in building relationships with families. The following resources aim to help schools capitalize on the time when conferences are in full-swing. Feel free to customize for your school's particular needs or to meet time constraints.

Available During Conferences Resources	
Location: WPS Family Engagement Portal → Parent-Teacher Conferences → During Conferences → Traditional	
Ask Me Parent Teacher Conference Table Tent English Spanish	Questions that parents may ask teachers during conferences.
Conference Action Plan	A tool to help guide discussion and goal-setting during conferences.
Parent Teacher Conference Sign	"Conference in Session" sign.
Parent Teacher Conference Sign-In Sheet	A three-column sign-in sheet.
Welcome Sings with Arrows English Spanish Vietnamese	A visual welcome sign in multiple languages.
Tell Us What you Think (English-Spanish)	A fast-paced reflection to gather parent responses
Effective Communication in Challenging Circumstances	A document that offers teachers tips on how to deliver unpleasant news to parents and how to converse with parents who are angry.

"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.

Surveying and reflection is critical immediately following conferences. Schools that seek to improve their practices can find resources that can help capture feedback from families and staff as well as samples of thank you notes to distribute to families who attended conferences. Feel free to customize for your school's particular needs or to meet time constraints.

Parent-Teacher Conference Staff Survey	
Description: Survey	1. Determine how to administer survey (staff-meeting, distribute through team leads, place in staff mailboxes, electronically, etc.)
Intended Audience: All staff	
Location on WPS Family Engagement Portal: Parent-Teacher Conferences→ Post-Conference → Traditional	2. Communicate the deadline that staff needs to return completed surveys
Duration of activity: 5 minutes to complete; 30-60 minutes to tabulate depending on size of staff	3. Assign staff member(s) to tabulate results. Share results with staff to use for future discussion and planning.
Materials Needed: Writing instruments Parent Teacher Conference Staff Survey	

| Family Survey	
Description: Survey	1. Determine which Family Survey your building will request families to complete.
Intended Audience: Families	
Location on WPS Family Engagement Portal: Parent-Teacher Conferences→ Post-Conference → Traditional	2. Create a plan for survey distribution and collection. Options include: • Setting up tables during conferences and asking families to complete surveys when conferences are over.
Duration of activity: 10 minutes to complete; 30-60 minutes to tabulate depending on number of returned forms	• Using an online survey service (such as GoogleDocs) for survey completion. This option requires schools to make computers available during conferences for families to use to complete the survey.
Materials Needed: Writing instruments Several survey options include: Post-Conference Family Survey; Parent Evaluation for Conferences; Post Conference Parent Survey English.	• Sending the survey home the week of or the week after conferences and asking families to return completed surveys to a specific teacher or place in the building. 3. Compile data from surveys collected. Consider sharing results with both staff and families.

Targeted Conference Data Survey Activity

Description: Survey	1. Determine the criteria for the target group (academic challenges, behavior challenges, a combination of both or different factors)
Intended Audience: Principals, Instructional Coaches, Data Leaders, Family Engagement Team and targeted families (e.g. families of students who have Ds and Fs or who are having specific academic and/or behavioral challenges)	2. Compile the contact information for families of students in the targeted group
Location on WPS Family Engagement Portal: Parent-Teacher Conferences→ Post-Conference → Traditional	3. Gather sign-in sheets to determine whether or not families of students belonging in the targeted group attended conferences.
Duration of activity: Could be a multi-day effort. Actual time varies depending on number surveyed; data tabulation varies depending on completed surveys	4. Call families whose students are in the targeted group and survey them using the Conference Attendance Survey Script and Worksheet.
Materials Needed: Writing instruments Phone lines Completed Parent-Teacher Conference Sign-In Sheets Compilation of names and phone numbers of families whose students belong to the targeted group Conference Attendance Survey Script and Worksheet Conference Attendance Feedback Activity Chart	5. Compile results 6. As a team, plug results into Conference Attendance Feedback Activity Chart. 7. Determine when and how results will be shared with staff.

Conference Attendance Staff Activity

Description: Professional Development	1. Distribute Conference Attendance Feedback Activty Form.
Intended Audience: All staff	2. Ask staff to complete "Challenges" column with the information collected from the Targeted Conference Data Activity.
Location on WPS Family Engagement Portal: Parent-Teacher Conferences→ Post-Conference → Traditional	3. Complete "Solutions" column on the Conference Attendance Feedback Activity Chart through small-group discussion.
Duration of activity: 5-20 minutes	4. Share out discussion highlights.
Materials Needed: Writing instruments Conference Attendance Feedback Activty Chart To complete this activity, school must have performed and compiled Targeted Conference Data Activity (see above module)	5. Collect completed charts to share with Principal, Leadership Team, and/or Family Engagement Team. PD

Additional Post Conference Resources	
Location: WPS Family Engagement Portal → Parent-Teacher Conferences → Post Conferences → Traditional	
Conference Attendance Form	Use this form to have teachers quickly and easily report conference attendance information
Thank You Cards	Samples of thank you cards students and teachers may send to families
Parent-Teacher Conference Thank You Note	A template for teachers to offer to families for attending conferences
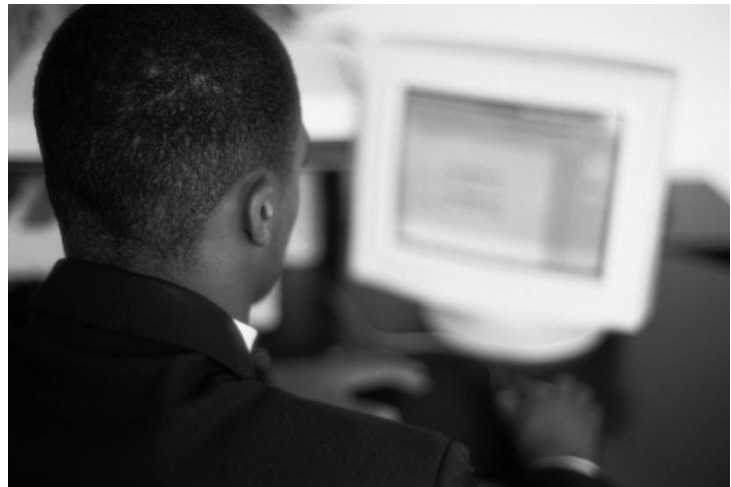
"Research proves that at Parent-Teacher Conferences teachers worry they'll be charged with not doing enough for the child, while parents fret about hearing criticisms from someone who doesn't yet know them or their kid. As a result, both parties too often leave conferences feeling dissatisfied. Planning ahead for effective conferences ensures positive interactions between families and teachers," *– excerpted from "The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn from Each Other," by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot*

Transition to Student-Led Conferences

The following information and resources aims to assist schools in educating and preparing staff about the transition to Student-Led Conferences. Feel free to customize for your school's particular needs or to meet time constraints.

Background Information

Empowering students to take a more focal part in delivering information about their achievements to their families during conferences has many benefits. Among them:

- 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
- Families feel a greater sense of partnership with schools
- Families 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 families. Teachers facilitate the conversation by guiding students to expound upon certain points and invite families to offer feedback.

Transitioning to Student-Led

There is no perfect way to implement this conference format. Schools that commit to implementing Student-Led Conferences will need to set realistic goals and expectations. To better ensure that Student-Led Conferences are effective, leadership at schools should plan 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 for all participants.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Transition to Student-Led Conferences

Surveying to gauge staff readiness to transition	
Description: Survey	1. Determine how to administer survey (staff-meeting, distribute through team leads, place in staff mailboxes, electronically, etc.) 2. Communicate the deadline that staff needs to return completed surveys. 3. Record on Task List assignment of staff member(s) to tabulate results. 4. Share results with Principal, Leadership and/or Family Engagement teams
Intended Audience: all teaching staff	
Location on WPS Family Engagement Portal: Parent-Teacher Conferences→ Student-Led Conferences	
Duration of activity: 10 minutes to complete; 30-60 minutes to tabulate depending on number of respondents	
Materials Needed: Writing instruments Assessing Current Practices Survey	

Using data to assess readiness to transition	
Description: Planning meeting	1. Review tabulated responses from the Assessing Current Practices Survey 2. Review Phase Chart and discuss the Six Components of Effective Student-Led Conferences. 3. Determine which phase is most appropriate for your school based on results of your team's discussion abou the Six Components of Effective Student-Led Conferences and/or your school's tabulated responses to the Assessing Current Practices Survey. 4. Discuss how to communiate with staff which phase your school will begin. 5. Complete Task List with any pending deadlines and assignments
Intended Audience: Principal, Leadership and/or Family Engagement teams	
Location on WPS Family Engagement Portal: Parent-Teacher Conferences→ Student-Led Conferences	
Duration of activity: 20 minutes	
Materials Needed: Writing instruments Phase Chart Assessing Current Practices Survey tabulation Task List	

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Transition to Student-Led Conferences

Preparing staff for the transition to Student-Led	
Description: Professional Development	1. Review Student-Led Conferneces: A Closer Look PowerPoint (adjust for time as needed)
Intended Audience: All staff	2. Review Phase Chart with staff
Location on WPS Family Engagement Portal: Parent-Teacher Conferences→ Student-Led Conferences	3. Discuss which phase the school will begin
	4. Have staff members fill in Task List with assignments and deadlines
Duration of activity: 15-40 minutes	5. Allow time for Q&A
Materials Needed: Writing instruments Student-Led Conferences: A Closer Look PowerPoint Phase Chart Task List	

"Student-led parent conferences create an ambience in which positive attitudes flourish, thereby enhancing communication across all stakeholders diffusing parent-teacher conflicts, and helping to foster a caring community," *–excerpted from The School Community Journal article, "Student Led Parent Conferences in Middle Schools" by Cheri Tuinstra and Diana Hiatt Michael*

Additional Transition to Student-Led Conferences Resources	
Student-Led Conference Guide	A professional development guide for schools considering a transition to Student-Led Conferences
Portfolio Information Handout	A research article for staff with best practices for portfolio organization
Student-Led Research Summaries	A compilation of research related to Student-Led Conferences
Staff Reflection	A reflection for staff to gauge the effectiveness of Student-Led Conference Professional Development offerings
Elementary Planning Worksheet	A planning tool that walks elementary schools through the critical components of implementing Student-Led Conferences
Elementary Sample Teacher Script	An outline for elementary teachers to customize to facilitate Student-Led Conferences
Elementary Sample Student Script	An outline for elementary students to customize to present during Student-Led Conferences
Elementary Sample Literacy Center Activity	An example of a learning center that can be built into the Student-Led Conference schedule
Portfolio Samples for Student-Led Conferences	Specific examples of portfolio contents
Middle School Sample Student Script	An outline for middle school students to customize to present during Student-Led Conferences
Middle School Sample Teacher Prompts	An outline for middle school teachers to customize to facilitate Student-Led Conferences
High School Sample Student Script	An outline for high school students to customize to present during Student-Led Conferences
High School Sample Teacher Prompts	An outline for high school teachers to customize to facilitate Student-Led Conferences
Sample Parent Letter	A letter that schools can customize to explain to families the purpose of Student-Led Conferences
Secondary Planning Worksheet	A planning tool that walks elementary schools through the critical components of implementing Student-Led Conferences
Student-Led Conference Staff Memo Template	A template principals may customize to share scheduling and other logistical information about Student-Led Conferences with staff
Student-Led Portfolio Grades 1 and 2	A portfolio folder that students may use to rate their performance. The folder may also be used to hold portfolio contents.