

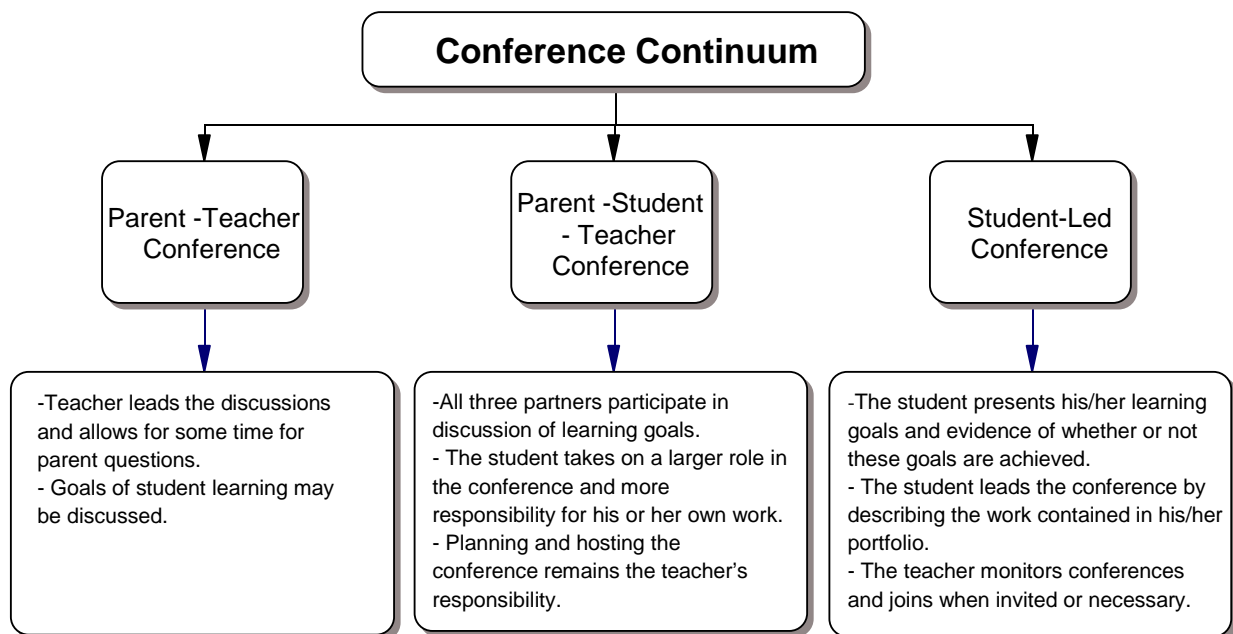
# Parent, Teacher and Student Conferencing

There are many partners who play significant roles in educating children. Parents are the first teacher of their child, and theirs is a crucial role in the education of their children.

Conferences are the formal framework that parents and teachers can use to learn together how to provide the best possible support system for the child's learning.

While many schools still use the standard fifteen minute conference format in which a teacher will see parents individually over the course of an afternoon or evening, in recent years, the traditional meeting has been challenged by two alternative conference formats: *the three way conference* and *the student led conference*.

## Where does your school sit on the continuum?



## Benefits of Student Led Conferences

- Students are held individually accountable for their learning.
- Students have a greater sense of responsibility for their learning.
- Students feel a sense of pride in accomplishment.
- There is a focus by all on assessment for learning.
- Increased confidence and self-esteem in students.
- Increased parent involvement.
- Strengthens the home-school partnership.
- A pleasant more relaxed and positive experience for all concerned.

The student-led conference has proven highly effective, but also requires that both the teacher and students develop a high level of expertise and confidence in the procedure through lengthy practice and preparation. Whichever sort of conference your school uses, there are some elements and needs that remain common in both planning and delivery

## BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

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- **Know your students-** not just their work. Be familiar with their strengths, weaknesses and areas of interest.
- **Gather samples** representing daily work at the student's lowest, average and best level. It's also a good idea to have exemplar student works that demonstrate the quality range of student assignments from least skilled to most.
- **Establish a friendly setting:** Sit with them at a table or beside them in chairs. Avoid putting a desk between you and the parents.
- **Dress professionally**, in a way that reflects the meeting's importance and shows respect for your visitors.
- **Prepare an agenda** modified for each student and reflecting the varying concerns- set realistic goals for student improvement in academic work and social skills. Don't plan to solve every problem and celebrate every success in one meeting.
- **Consider sharing the general agenda with parents in advance**, and ensuring that they know what is expected of them at the conference. You may ask them to prepare a list of their own concerns and questions in advance.
- Make sure your agenda allows **time for parents to comment and ask questions**.
- If students are expected to attend Parent-Teacher Conferences make sure they are **aware of their role during the conference**. Encourage parents to bring their children to the conferences.



## Questions for Parents

To the Teacher	To the Child
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is my child working on now? Next?</li><li>• What does my child do well?</li><li>• What does my child need more support to do?</li><li>• What can we do at home to help our child meet this goal?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do you like doing in this class?</li><li>• What do you find difficult in this class?</li><li>• What do you think would help you in this class?</li></ul>

## DURING THE CONFERENCE

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### Beginning

- Welcome the parents; be friendly but professional.
- Start the meeting with a positive observation about the student.
- Speak clearly and avoid educational jargon.

### Middle

- Begin by discussing student strengths then move to areas of concern. Use specific examples of student's work when describing any strength, weakness or means of improvement.
- Be realistic- prioritize your concerns and focus on the area of greatest need don't overwhelm parents.
- Be prepared to explain your evaluation processes, both formal and informal. Use the student's work and student records in explanation.
- Allow parents the opportunity to ask questions or voice their concerns.
- Actively listen to parents' comments and questions; make it clear that you are hearing their concerns and will consider them seriously.

### End

- Adhere to the Conference Schedule. If more time is required, offer a follow up meeting
- End with a positive comment.
- Summarize the conference. Repeat main ideas and suggestions, and any agreed upon strategies.
- Plan with the parents for follow up activities and conferencing. Let parents know their support is needed and appreciated. Thank them for attending the conference and encourage them to stay in close contact.



## AFTER THE CONFERENCE

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- Review and record areas of discussion.
- Do your part of the follow up work as agreed.
- Continue positive communication with parents between conferences.

### References

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