

March: A Month for Questions & Conferences

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Your child's school year is almost to an end. However, your questions and decisions during the next few months will be your most important. Our article will discuss curriculum standards, conference questions, and changes regarding assessments/services for English Language Learners (ELL).

The school curriculum is based on standards written by the state - which carefully reviewed the standards expected at the national level - and thus, the commitment to **leave no child behind**. The state provides a framework of standards to be met to ensure all children receive a public education that instills the knowledge and skills to become productive and responsible citizens. Schools are constantly editing and revising their curriculum to master the goal of leaving no child behind. You can visit the State of Connecticut Department of Education website: www.state.ct.us/sde/index.html and click on Curriculum, which will take you to the Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction. At this web page, you can further investigate the 'Guide to Curriculum Development: Purposes, Practices, Procedure', 'CT Framework-K-12 Curricular Goals and Standards', and 'Framework Updates' (at this site you will see how the standards are constantly changing and why professional days are so important!). After viewing this website, you will understand the guidelines your child's teacher must follow and the importance of having the resources/materials necessary to get the job done. Also, as a parent, you will have the information necessary to observe if your child's school is fulfilling the necessary requirements/expectations mandatory of a public school.

Let's provide the following example:

One required framework of mathematics is for students to understand how quantitative relationships are represented by numbers. A subtopic to this is students should use numbers and their properties to compute flexibly and fluently and to reasonably estimate measures and quantities. This is a goal that is revisited in pre-k through grade 12 to build upon previously developed skills and to create the spiral effect of learning. A grade one teacher matches this objective to the grade one requirement of the student's ability to count by groups, add one more to the grouping, and compare values of groups. Your child's teacher plans to meet this objective by reviewing previous assessments to establish a 'starting point', using materials and resources which would be beneficial and support the child's learning style, and conduct assessments to determine if the objective was mastered.

During the parent-teacher conference, you should be informed of the curriculum expectations for the semester, an explanation from the teacher how his/her lessons are meeting curriculum expectations, documentation of the progress your child has made from the beginning of the semester to the present (ex. assessments, portfolio of class work, reports from other specialists) how your child's assessment results compare to local school scores and state standards, resources/materials used to support the curriculum and the individual goals for your child, and last but not most important- activities

you can do at home to help your child feel successful and promote the desire to be a life-long learner.

Upon receiving all this information, you should have a very accurate summary of how well your child is performing in his/her grade level. If your child is not meeting curriculum expectations, now is the opportunity to ask what type of intervention has been or will be offered to help your child succeed at his/her grade level. This intervention can come in the form of in-school support, after school programs, summer school programs and/or retention. Keeping in close contact with your child's teacher, and all specialist who may be working with your child, during these last few months of school will help you determine if your child has mastered his/her grade level and other options offered if mastery has not occurred. Always remember that you, as the parent, have the final say in your child's placement for the next school year!

A child is labeled an ELL (English Language Learner) student when his/her primary language is not English. This is determined from the following questions during registration: What language did your child learn to speak first? What is the primary language spoken by the parent/guardian or other persons living in the home? and What is the primary language spoken by your child at home? If the parent has checked yes to any one of the questions, testing becomes mandatory. A parent cannot refuse testing, but may refuse services. The test, called LAS Links, has recently been rewritten to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. All schools as of this year must use this updated LAS Links. After the mandatory initial testing, all mandatory annual assessment scores are due to the state by May 15th. The test items on LAS Links include Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. At the discretion of the school system, tests are either scored by trained staff at the school, or sent out to be scored for a fee. After scoring, the child's level will be identified as above proficient, proficient, intermediate, early intermediate or beginning. The proficient or above proficient level is considered mastery, and the child will not be offered services. If services are offered and accepted by the parent, it is presently at the school's discretion to select the department/staff member who will provide the additional support. Support materials are available for purchase to assist the educator in mastering the requirements of the LAS Links. As the parent, it is important to contact the school and become aware of the procedures presently in place at your school system.

We hope the information regarding curriculum, parent-teacher conferences and ELL standards is helpful. As Remedial Reading teachers, we enjoy working in the public school system and providing helpful information to parents and their children. *If you have any further questions/concerns we may help you answer, please send e-mail to Linda & Tricia at LINDAMASSUCCI@aol.com*