

Three Ingredients of a Quality Parent-Teacher Conference

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It is the time of year for holiday preparations, family get-togethers and watching weather reports for the ever-changing New England weather! For parents, it also means the first parent-teacher conference of the school year. A quality parent-teacher conference will include three very important words: assessment, curriculum and goals.

Assessments are conducted to determine a starting point with the grade level curriculum. Teacher's may review a child's assessments from the end of last year and/or conduct assessments at the beginning of the school year. At the parent-teacher conference, at least one pre-assessment and one post-assessment in each subject should be shared with the parent. The assessments will provide information regarding the child's level and how it compares to the curriculum expectations and state standards.

The school curriculum is determined by matching the state standards and expectations as outlined in the Preschool thru Twelfth Grade Curriculum Framework. Every public school must follow these grade level standards to meet the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act. The website for the State Board of Education is an excellent resource to review the framework and investigate the curriculum needed to be mastered at each grade level. A parent may also request the State Curriculum Framework and school curriculum is available to review while waiting for their scheduled conference time at school.

Individual goals will be discussed and decided between the teacher and parent at the conference. After reviewing the pre and post assessments and reflecting on the curriculum, collaborating to establish goals for the next few months is a necessity. The partnership between school and home is a vital ingredient to a successful school year. Parents need to be aware of grade level expectations, student goals and support services- to insure future concerns are addressed appropriately and legally in the school system.

The following questions are provided to help parents conduct a productive parent-teacher conference:

1. What standards does my child need to master?
2. How do these standards match with the curriculum and grade level?
3. What can I do at home to support the classroom instruction?
4. If my child is below current grade level standards/criteria, what support services are offered at the school?
5. If my child has already mastered the current grade level standards/criteria, what standards will be taught to continue the spiral effect of learning?
6. Where can I review the grade level curriculum and/or the Connecticut Frameworks for Kindergarten thru Grade Twelve?
7. How can I contact the other teachers who are involved with my child's education? (i.e. school psychologist, speech teacher, reading teacher)
8. If I have further questions, how can I contact you and/or can we plan another conference for an increased amount of time?
9. If my child seems to be having learning difficulties, can we schedule a Planning & Placement Team Meeting (PPT) to discuss additional

testing, remedial services and observations from additional school staff support services.

10. What types of volunteer services do you need in the classroom/school?

In conclusion, every parent-teacher conference must be viewed as an opportunity for everyone involved in a child's education to share, inform and collaborate. A conference is more than a teacher comment of 'No need to worry, Mrs. Smith, your child is passing all the tests' or 'Your child is a wonderful addition to the class.' An effective conference uses assessments, classroom observations, parental insight, school curriculum and state frameworks to enhance student learning. If you would like more information to help prepare for your child's parent-teacher conference, please e-mail your questions.

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