

Document the points covered. While it's often difficult to take notes during the session, it's important to be able to recall key points at a later date. Jotting them down will help you do this.

Thank parents for taking the time to come and meet with you and make sure everyone knows whose responsibility it is to call the next morning – you, the parents or both.

**AFTER ANY CONFERENCE
YOU SHOULD...**

List the conclusions reached, including how the next conference should come about. As noted earlier, the process for calling the next conference should be made clear before the end of the meeting.

Note your personal impressions of the conference and record any information that may help you teach the student more effectively in the future.

Follow up if necessary.

Tips for Teachers



PARENT STUDENT TEACHER CONFERENCES



Student progress conferences can improve communication and understanding between the home and the school, whether they are for reporting or other purposes. However, unless properly planned and carried out, they have the potential to lead to misunderstanding, confusion and even frustration. This brochure, prepared for you by the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, contains some suggestions for making the most of these valuable sessions.

THE STUDENT PROGRESS "REPORTING" CONFERENCE

The standard ways of reporting a student's progress to the home always seem to be changing. However, one of the most valuable supplements to written report cards (or the more current computer print-outs), is the STUDENT PROGRESS CONFERENCE. These meetings are often the best way to inform parents about their child's progress while opening a good **two-way** communications channel.



THE STUDENT PROGRESS "CRISIS" CONFERENCE

Student progress conferences sometimes have to be called hastily by a teacher or parent to deal with an emerging concern or a particular incident. While all the guidelines for the reporting conference also apply here, there are some additional points to consider.

Make sure **you and** the parents clearly understand the problem or incident.

Prepare as carefully as possible – **be informed** about school methods, purposes, Department of Education curriculum guides, etc.

Ensure privacy and confidentiality.

Be professional and keep to the topic.

Develop an attitude of **co-operation**, and avoid getting into an argument.

Make plans **together** for future progress.

End the meeting on a **positive** note.



PREPARING TO MEET THE PARENTS!

Planning is the key to a successful parent-student-teacher conference. While some of the information that follows may seem extremely basic, it's included because sometimes the basics are the very things of which we often need to be reminded.

Make sure you know the student... by name, not just by the desk he or she occupies.

Prepare a checklist for yourself that includes such things as work habits, day-to-day performance as it relates to capabilities, as well as social and emotional adjustment. Then prepare an outline of skills, concepts and topics covered during the past term and indicate level of attainment for individual students. Having this checklist can help you provide a well-rounded view; it can also help you answer specific questions about specific topics.

Be prepared to explain. Parents are often interested, but don't always understand or know about the school's programs and evaluation procedures. To ensure you're able to answer all their questions, it's important to review anything you're not entirely certain of

before the meetings start. However, if someone asks a questions for which you don't have the answer, remember you can always tell them you don't know, and promise to get back to them within a specific (and short) period of time.

Prepare examples of the student's work so that when you are discussing a particular strength or weakness, you have specific examples to show parents and the student. Identify possible solutions.

Share e-mail or contact information if parents need to get in touch after the meeting.

DURING THE CONFERENCE

Start with a **positive** statement, because a favorable comment, before you begin your discussion of the student's performance, can help set a good tone for the meeting. Ending the meeting with a positive comment is also a good idea.

Use **definite** examples when explaining either strengths or weaknesses, or ways to improve, and when discussing level of maturity and personal adjustment. These examples will help parents understand how you've arrived at your assessment.

Explain standards. Be explicit when you tell parents how you've determined their child's capabilities. Explain things like the purposes and limitations of achievement and intelligence tests.

Don't use jargon. This is extremely important because you want parents to understand what you're telling them and the use of jargon is a sure way to keep them from doing that. Words to avoid (and replace with everyday words) are overachiever, cognitive, regressive, etc.

Suggest techniques parents can use, but don't tell them what they have to do because telling someone what to do can often arouse resentment. Instead, explain some procedures that have worked in other cases and discuss them in terms of whether or not you (and the parents) think they'll work for this particular student.

Don't predict. You may be wrong when you express an opinion about the probable future achievements of a child. Your discussion should be based on the current school year.

No one wins an argument, so if parents refuse to acknowledge their child has a difficulty, it's useless to describe a solution for them. Additional examples might help, and if they do, then solutions can be discussed. Be prepared to

limit discussion. If a student has many difficulties, you might want to deal with one of them in an in-depth fashion rather than all of them in a superficial way.

Politely refuse to discuss certain matters which could confuse, mislead, or cause you to be unprofessional – psychological interpretations; placing blame for a student's performance on another teacher, parent or student; specific test scores or ratings; and other teachers or children. If parents keep referring to a particular problem, however, it is likely a real concern for them. Even if it seems insignificant, allow time for it. Also remember that anything said in a parent-student-teacher conference should be treated as confidential.

Encourage parents to ask questions. Parents will likely have something they want to talk with you about, so ask them directly if there's anything they want to discuss.

Take stock when the meeting concludes. Summarize parents' ideas and your suggestions, and how both of you can follow through.

