Student-led Conferences

Communication, Accountability, Ownership

Cheryl Lambert  Data/Instruction Coach West Carroll Special School District  2015
Overview

• Facilitates academic communication between parents, students, and teachers.
• Fosters student accountability.
• Supports student ownership.
• Builds parent involvement.
Guiding Principles

- Student-centered
- Parent-involved
- Teacher-facilitated
Presentation Objectives

- Literature Review
- Experiential Data from 2014-15 implementation of elementary school Student-led Conferences.
Goals

- Engage students in learning.
- Increase parent participation.
- Support ownership, accountability, and effective communication.
- Impact student achievement.
Demographics

- We serve the community in the western part of Carroll County which has a population of around 2,000 from the communities of Atwood, McLemoresville, and Trezevant.

- Our elementary school has an enrollment of 290 students, grades 3 – 6, and 15 faculty members.

West Carroll Elementary School

Grades: 3-6
Student Enrollment: 290
Safe Schools Grant recipient
72.8% Economically Disadvantaged
21.4% Students with Disabilities
11% Black or African American
85.5% White

Teachers: 15
3 (Level 1)
2 (Level 2)
5 (Level 3)
1 (Level 4)
4 (Level 5)

Subject Data:
Improved: ED Reading/ELA, ED and SWD Math
Declined: SWD Reading/ELA

Western region of Carroll County
Population: 2,149
Atwood (938), McLemoresville (352), and Trezevant (859)
19.2% below poverty level (higher than state avg. of 17.3%)
Description

• Scheduled time is provided for students and parents to meet in the classroom to discuss work evidence students have collected over time.

• In a student-led conference, learners conduct a 15 – 20 minute discussion with parents using the evidence of their own work to demonstrate academic strengths and challenges.

• Teacher serves as a facilitator during the conference, answering questions, managing the time, and offering assistance when needed.

• Culmination of differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and data-driven accountability.

• Traditional conferences generally exclude the learners, but research supports student-involved discussions.
Evidence of self-awareness of learning (Brodie, B., 2014)
Self-evaluating strengths and weaknesses (Buchino, M., 2011)
Self-regulated strategies (Clark, I., 2012)
Student-led conferences in inclusion settings (Conderman, G., Ikan, P., & Hatcher, R., 2000)
Responsibility, communication, self-confidence, parent participation (Hackmann, D., 1995, Nov.)
Increased student achievement (Stiggins, R.J., Chappuis, J., 2005)
Formative and Differentiated

- Data Notebooks
- Self-evaluation/Peer-evaluation
- Rubrics
- Feedback
- RTI²
- Goal-setting
- Evidence of learning
Evidence of Learning

- Students chose work samples for their folder (portfolio).
- Teacher collaborated with students to choose evidence.
- Students were encouraged to choose evidence of growth by showing evidence of early work compared to edited, improved work.
- The work evidence provides the foundation for an effective student-led conference.
- Limit the number of work samples to fit your allotted conference time.
Practice

- Practice, practice, practice.
- Consider providing a script for the first conference experience.
- Consider pair-practicing in the classroom.
Student-involvement

- Checklist for conference *(see Checklist document).*
- Choices about work evidence.
- Partners practice with the ‘checklist’ script.
- Design of conference ‘signal’

Write something you might change about the conference.

*I was thinking that if we needed help, that we could flip a cup over.*
Parent Communication

- Inform the parents about the new structure of the conference (*see Brochure*).
- Allow multiple choices for conference times (*see Parent letters*).
- Follow-up with reminders about the up-coming conference.
- Distribute and collect surveys following the conference to help with evaluation purposes.
Experiential Details
## Experiential Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Responses: Students Agree</th>
<th>Responses: Parents Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conference went well.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared for the conference.</td>
<td>92.7%</td>
<td>92.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good job talking about work evidence.</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous leading the conference.</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Giving student choices about work evidence.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me do better in school/support at home.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged to increase parent involvement.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would like other conferences to be student-led.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comments from Parents

10. What was the best part of this student-led conference?
   - He was very involved.

11. This student-led conference was different from a traditional conference experience. Which conference style do you prefer: traditional or student-led? Why?
   - Traditional

9. Write one thing you would change at the next student-led conference.
   - I'd be on time

8. Write one goal that your child could work on in Reading class.
   - Continue to attend tutoring

10. What was the best part of this student-led conference?
    - Having one on one time to hear my student talk to me.

11. This student-led conference was different from a traditional conference experience. Which conference style do you prefer: traditional or student-led? Why?
    - I like the student led type. I get to hear my daughter speak as well as her teacher.

12. Did this went very well?
    - Follow the child to express their progress

13. What was the best part of this student-led conference?
    - Student led allows the children to express themselves better.

14. How was the sound in the classroom?
    - Less sound in the classroom
Comments from Students

8. Write one goal that you can work on in Reading class.
   
9. Write one thing you would change at your next conference.
   
10. What was the best part of your conference?

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SLC Academic Data
After conducting a two-way ANOVA results indicate a statistically significant difference in time 1 and time 3 when comparing universal screening scores before and after the student-led conferences with a $p$ value of < .05.

- The non-parametric tests conducted from the surveys indicate no statistical difference between student and parent perceptions with positive responses on all eight survey questions \((\text{see Surveys})\).
Combination Format

- All of the parents who attended both conference formats indicated that they benefitted from both formats during the school year.

Comments:
I enjoy both, more of the student led because it teaches the children to speak in front of people. That will be great, because they will use that when they get in high school.
“...With My Own Words”
Conclusion

• The initial implementation of student-led conferences with a group of 3rd grade students demonstrates the positive impact on students, parents, and teachers.

• Reviewing the statistical results of student-led conferencing in our school setting along with the barriers and challenges for implementation helped to explain implications for future implementation.
Some limitations include:

- The small sample size of participants in this study.
- The age of the students involved in the study.
- The level of experience of the students.
- The level of experience of the teachers.
- The time limitations of the conference.
- The extent of preparation by the students.
Reflection

• Perception of Student Achievement
• Development of Accountability
• Experience in Communication
• Self-confidence, responsibility, organization, ownership
• Parent Involvement
• Self-Advocacy
• Uniqueness of Differentiation
Conclusion

As school leaders consider the use of student-led conferences, several potential benefits should be considered:

– Increase student accountability.
– Impact parent involvement.
– Strengthen self-evaluation practices.
– Develop academic awareness.
– Activate student VOICE in learning progressions.
References


Questions and Discussion

Thank you for attending this session. Enjoy your conference.

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West Carroll Special School District
wcssd.org
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PARENT?

Parents participate as active listeners and as advocates for their child.

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE, PARENTS:

- Encourage their child’s involvement in the learning process.
- Familiarize themselves with the conference process.
- Support their child’s review of learning goals for the student-led conference.
- Prepare a list of questions for discussion.

DURING THE CONFERENCE:

- Provide encouragement, praise, and reinforcement.
- Assist their child in identifying strengths and learning goals.
- Work with their child and teachers to determine the next steps for learning.
- Agree on the date of the next conference to address progress or concerns.

AFTER THE CONFERENCE:

- Participate in the conference evaluation.
- Discuss the long-term value of their child’s engagement in learning.
- Continue to review new goals and the next steps for learning with their child.
WHAT IS A STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE?

Student-led conferences are meetings that are preplanned. During this meeting, students act as partners in learning by providing a review of their work for parents and teachers. Students are given the resources to lead the conference; they have portfolios that provide samples of their work. Students are given rubrics and self-assessments that assist them with pinpointing their strengths and weaknesses.

STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY FROM THE TRADITIONAL PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES.

- Students participate in all stages of the conference. They prepare and organize work samples, use checklists to demonstrate new learning, and plan next steps.
- Students lead the conversation to show what they have learned. They receive feedback from their parents and teachers about strengths and goals for improvement.

STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES BENEFIT STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND TEACHERS.

- Students take more ownership of their learning.
- Parents and students have open communication about school, after-school activities, and other important decisions in life.
- Teachers establish a stronger working relationship with parents and students.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT?

STUDENTS LEAD THE CONFERENCE.

Before the conference, students:

- Collect work samples to share with their parents.
- Review their work with the teacher and learning partners.
- Create learning goals.
- Explain the benefit of the conference as a learning process to their parents.

During the conference:

- Share and discuss learning with their parents.
- Identify strengths and learning goals with parents and teachers.
- Connect their learning to long-term career goals.
- Determine next steps to improve learning.
- Agree on the date of the next conference to address progress or concerns.

After the conference:

- Discuss the benefits of the conference.
  Work on the next steps to improve learning.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER?

TEACHERS HELP STUDENTS PREPARE FOR THE CONFERENCE.

Before the conference, teachers:

- Guide students in the collection of work samples and review of learning goals.
- Review learning goals.
- Explain the conference as a learning process to parents.
- Organize the conference area for successful communication.
- Set up a conferencing schedule.

During the conference:

- Act as a guide and offer positive feedback.
- Identify new learning goals with students and parents.
- Inquire about students’ long-term career goals.
- Assist students and parents in determining the next steps for learning.
- Agree on the date of the next conference to address progress or concerns.

After the conference:

- Provide feedback to students and parents about the conference process.
- Review new goals and next steps for learning with students and parents.
Student-led Conference Checklist

Student says this:
“Thank you for taking the time to come to my report card conference.”

Student does this:
Open your folder and read from this script while you show your work. Write a checkmark in the box when you finish talking about that part of the script.

Student says this:
“Please hold all of your questions or comments until the end. Write your questions or comments down on this index card so we can discuss them at the end.”
(Give parents one index card and a pencil.)

1. Student says: “In reading, my grade for this 9 weeks is ___________________.”
   “Here is a sample Reading Test.”
   “I chose this because _______________________________________________________.”
   “These are the things I knew on the test: ______________________________________.”
   “I did not really know these things: ______________________________________.”

2. Student says: “Here is a sample of my writing.”
   “I chose this because ________________________________________________________.”
   “I did well on this part: ______________________________________________________.”
   “I did not do well on this part: __________________________________________________.”

3. Student says: “Here is an AR report about my reading progress.”
   “Here is one of my favorite books. It is about ______________________________________.”

4. For intervention students:
   Student says: “I am in an RTI² intervention. Here are my progress monitoring scores and my graph.”
   “This is the skill I am working on: __________________________________________.”
   “My goal is __________________________.”

5. At the end of your conference -
   Student says: “What questions do you want to ask about my work?”
   (Answer questions from your parents about your work.)
   Student says: “Now my teacher will come over to talk for one minute.”
   (Turn your cup around and start on the survey while you wait for your teacher.)
Dear Parents/ Guardians,

This grading period, a few students have been chosen to participate in student-led parent conferences. These conferences will provide an opportunity for students to reflect upon their success so far during the school year and to provide you with examples of what they have learned in Reading/Language Arts. I want to emphasize that these will be student-led conferences and that I will be in the room as a facilitator and observer, but my participation will be limited (more as a guide for the student). Student-led means that the student will be talking to you about their progress instead of the teacher doing all of the talking. I will be available to guide the discussions.

This is an extremely positive opportunity for my students to emphasize their strengths, acknowledge their areas of need, and, with you in attendance, plan their goals for the next grading period. Please make every effort to be a part of this conference. The students are practicing for this conference with you and they want to show you what they do at school. This is an opportunity to listen to your child talk about their education.

While specific dates and times are not yet established, it would assist me greatly if you could acknowledge your willingness and availability for this unique process. Please return the bottom portion of this letter.

Thank you,

(Please Check Appropriate Response)

_____ I am interested and willing to attend the student-led conference.
_____ I am not interested in attending the student-led conference.

________________________________________
(Student’s First and Last Name)

________________________________________
(Parent/Guardian Signature)

**Because I anticipate the student-led conferences to be about 15 minutes, I am blocking off one hour of the four scheduled conference hours to only hold student-led conferences. I will facilitate several conferences during the same time period. What time will be best for you? Please mark your first preference with a 1 and your second preference with a 2. It is my goal to accommodate everyone. I will follow-up with confirmation.

_____ 6:00 – 6:15
_____ 6:15 – 6:30
_____ 6:30 – 6:45
_____ 6:45 – 7:00
Dear Parents/Guardians:

It is time for our student-led conferences and your child has been working very hard to prepare for this event. He or she has selected work samples from all classes, analyzed his or her strengths and weaknesses as a learner, and set possible goals for the remainder of the school year. Please come to this conference prepared to listen, acknowledge his or her effort and growth, and ask questions of your child. You will be asked to help complete goals with your child and develop a plan to achieve them.

You and your child have been scheduled for a conference on:

________date __________time __________room

Student name _____________________________

If you need to reschedule, please call me at (type number here).

Successful students are supported by involved parents.
Thank you for attending this conference.
Dear Parent/ Guardian,

Thank you for participating in your child’s student-led conference! Now you have some homework. Please write your child a positive personal note about the conference. Below are some areas you might think about including as you write:

What I noticed about your work was…
I was proud of you for…
Keep up the good work on…
I know you have difficulty sometimes but…
I’m glad you are making an extra effort in…
How can I help you…

We hope this experience was as rewarding to you and your child as the process was to us! Thanks again for taking the extra effort!

Sincerely,

____________________
### Student-led Conference Survey

**Parent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Disagree Some</th>
<th>3 Don’t Know</th>
<th>4 Agree Some</th>
<th>5 Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>This conference went well.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>My child was ready for the conference.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>My child did a good job talking about his/her work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I liked the decision to allow my child to choose the work to show during the conference.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>This conference experience will help me provide better support at home.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>This conference experience encouraged me to increase my level of parent involvement.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>I would like to participate in another conference like this one.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Write one goal that your child could work on in Reading class.</td>
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# Student-led Conference Survey

**Student**

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<td>2. I was ready for my conference.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I did a good job talking about my work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I was nervous during my conference.</td>
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<td>5. I liked choosing the work to show my parents.</td>
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<td>6. This conference will help me do better in school.</td>
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<td>7. I would like to do another conference like this one.</td>
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