



## □ Ideas for Parent-Teacher Conferences (page 1 of 2)

### **Prior to the conference, plan to:**

- Meet at a conference table, not at your desk. Your desk may be perceived as a symbol of power.
- Place the table in a private part of the room away from the door.
- Use adult-sized furniture. Sit at the same level as the parent.
- Set up a comfortable waiting area for those parents who arrive early. It should be out of the weather and out of earshot of the conference in progress. For example, keep several large chairs outside the classroom. You may even want to have a table with coffee, tea, water, or juice with a “Help Yourself While You Wait” sign.
- Post a notice on the door so you are not interrupted.
- Have paper and pencils available for parents who choose to keep notes.
- Have a box of tissues within easy reach.
- Prepare questions and topics you wish to discuss.
- List academic strengths and areas that need improvement.
- Collect samples of student work and place them in a folder/portfolio.
- Have your grade and plan books available.
- Have sample textbooks and materials available for parents to see.

- Arrange student folders according to your conference schedule.
- Be sure there is student work on display in the classroom.
- Inspect your room—it should be neat and tidy. Have students clean their desks.
- Have puzzles, toys, crayons, etc. ready in case the parent brings a younger sibling.
- Dress for success.

### **During the conference, plan to:**

- Greet the parent by name with a firm handshake at the door. Make the parent feel comfortable.
- Use language that is respectful to the parent, the child, and their culture.
- Avoid using educational jargon.
- Be as objective as possible, but show a feeling of empathy and a sense of concern. Attempt to place yourself in the parent’s shoes.
- Accept the parent’s view of the child and then cautiously reconstruct it to incorporate your own picture. Keep in mind that a teacher’s view is only one perspective.
- Begin with positive information and student strengths.
- Avoid comparing the child with other children or siblings.
- Be very careful in making broad generalizations about a child (i.e., “All boys are like that”). Do not make it easy to be misquoted.