

FAMILY-TEACHER CONFERENCE

Family-Teacher Conferences are opportunities to share your insights and continue to strengthen relationships with families. During this time, you can communicate the results from a child’s screening and informal/formal assessments. Conferences also allow time to discuss milestones, general knowledge of child development and share available resources. This enables you to partner with the family to set educational goals for their child.

Best Practice Summary

- Make sure your schedule is flexible enough to meet the needs of all families. The amount of time scheduled for each conference should be individualized for each family and child.
- Be prepared. Keep all work samples, assessments, and anecdotal notes organized.
- Share a personal story about the child, such as their favorite activities or areas of the classroom and peers they often play with. This creates a natural flow to share their developmental progress.
- Always start with a positive statement when discussing a challenging topic and end with another positive statement about the child. This is called the Sandwich Effect.
- Support your discussion and assessments by sharing visual examples from the child’s portfolios of work, along with feedback.
- Be aware of information overload. Make sure you are meeting families where they are when sharing about their child.
- Write specific goals for each child and create an action plan with steps for improvement, as well as develop a timeline to follow progress. Involve families during this process as much as possible by asking them to help create goals and/or make modifications to goals you have already made.
- Document the outcomes of the conference with signatures for your records.

Remain Professional: Three Things to Keep in Mind

1. Use positive communication when speaking about the program or staff.
2. Keep confidentiality by refraining from comparing students to each other.
3. Bridge the gap between home and your program by focusing on developing the partnership between yourself and the family. Remember to be respectful and sensitive to different cultures and lifestyles.

Planning Considerations

- What does your conference format look like? Phone, in-person, or video conference.
- Ask yourself, “Am I providing enough time?”
- What is your body language saying to the families? Is your tone of voice warm and inviting?
- Are the materials and documentation you want to share organized?
- Are you aware of your program’s resources to help meet the needs of the family and child in your care? Have you included your administrator in the referral process?
- How can you use this opportunity to strengthen your relationships? Remember, this experience can be uncomfortable for parents and educators alike.