

Student-Led Parent Conferences



by
Linda Pierce Picciotto



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Chapter One

What are Student-Led Parent Conferences?

As the name implies, they are conferences led by the students themselves. Parents come to these conferences to learn about their child's progress.

Through activities and discussions at different “centres” in the room (and sometimes elsewhere in the school, as well), students tell their parents what they have been learning in the different academic, social, physical, and fine arts areas. They show and discuss both class and individual projects. They may demonstrate skills they are developing in gym and show how they can solve particular math problems. They discuss samples of their written work and read from books they have been enjoying. They show off their artwork. They discuss the areas they wish to work on during the upcoming term. They discuss their behavior in the classroom and on the playground. Parents and students may work together to set some goals.

What parents are seeing is an accurate account of their child's growth and development. What they see is much more real than any words the teacher can speak or write.

These conferences can be held at traditional report-card times or they can be scheduled at other times in the year. The forms students and parents complete at the conferences can become part of the report card for the term or they can be photocopied and sent home as additional evidence of student progress.

Math

Kindergarten: Make an Animal Cracker graph

Grade One: Make a Raisin Bran graph

All: Show your parent(s) what math materials you work with during math activity time

Marg and I wanted these math activities to show parents the kinds of things their children were learning and also *how* they were learning. We both believe very strongly in the “hands-on” approach to mathematics teaching and we wanted to demonstrate some of our teaching methods.

At the time both of us taught K-1 combination classes. We decided to set up different activities for each group. Both the Raisin Bran and Animal Cracker graphs had been part of our math program during the weeks prior to the conferences. We had been working with a variety of graphing techniques with our students. We reviewed these two in order to make sure students still remembered how to do them and could explain them to their parents.

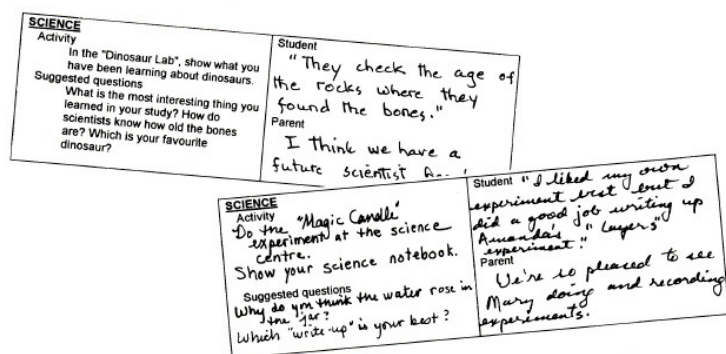
These are the instructions we posted at the Math Centre:

Raisin Bran Graph

1. Take one scoop (100 ml) of cereal from each of the three brands of Raisin Bran. Put them on the paper towels.
2. Count the raisins in each pile.
3. Complete the graph using three different colours.
4. Ask your parent(s) questions:
 - ...Which brand has the most raisins?
 - ...Which brand has the fewest?
 - ...What differences and similarities do you see when you look at the different kinds of cereal? (colour, size of flakes, and so forth)
5. Carefully put each brand of cereal back into the correct boxes, and leave the table neat and ready for the next student.

Animal Cracker Graph

1. Place the animals on the graph table, each kind in its own column.
2. Talk about the results with your parent(s).
 - ...Which animal appears the most?
 - ...How many giraffes are there?
 - ...How many more sheep are there than gorillas?
 - ...Which column has the fewest animals?
3. Place all of the crackers back onto the plate so they will be ready for the next student.



Science—Suggested Activities

- Demonstrate the "Blast-Off" experiment. How does the balloon make the rocket shoot along the string?
- Look at our Bee Book. Explain what is happening on your page of the book.
- Look at your Bulb Booklet. How tall is your bulb? Is your bulb blooming?
- Discuss your Egg Incubation book with your parents.
- Look at our class Polar Bear book. On the "How They Look" page, talk about the many ways their bodies protect them from the cold.
- Show the "animal group" poster you helped to make.
- Show your parent(s) the cocoon that was spun before our very eyes.
- In the Dinosaur Study Lab, show what you have been learning about dinosaurs. Tell which is your favourite dinosaur. Why do you find it interesting?
- Show what you have discovered at the magnet table.
- Follow directions carefully as you demonstrate the Floating Drops Science Experiment. Ask you parents to predict and hypothesize while you work, as we did in class. Wear the lab coat, if you wish.
- Look through your Scientist of the Day book together. Which was your favourite experiment?
- Show your parents your Tree Book. Tell three things you learned about "Wildlife Trees" at our visit to Francis King Park. Look at the leaf closely under the magnifying glass.
- Take your parents on a tour of our salmon murals. Tell how each mural shows a stage in the salmon's life. Which mural did you work on? Now read your own salmon booklet together. Which is your best illustration?
- Using the fish chart as a guide, tell what you remember about the fish that the naturalist cut open for us at the river.
- Look at the three crystal-making experiments: sugar, sea salt, and Epson salts. Tell what you can remember about our crystal study.
- Show and discuss your Rock Lab book.
- Look through the stereoscope and describe what you see. (Some children will need help adjusting the eyepieces.)



Appendix

Forms to Duplicate or Adapt

Form 1

It's Conference Time!

a letter to parents explaining student-led conferences and inviting them to attend. Fill in the "time slots" before photocopying the letter.

Form 2

My Conference

a letter from the child to the parents reminding them about the conferences

Form 3a, 3b

Student-Led Parent Conference

a basic form (two pages, to be run back-to-back)

1. Adapt for your own use by photocopying one copy of each page and making necessary changes (change names of the centers if necessary, add your own Activities and Suggested Questions, and so forth.) You might want to print some of the activities and questions on the form and put others on cards or a chart at the different centers, if space on the form is a problem. Print your name and the date of the conference at the top before copying
2. Photocopy a class set of the forms on standard photocopy paper or thicker tag paper.
3. Distribute the forms to your students and ask them to print their names on the top line. You might ask them to draw little pictures in the margins to personalize the form, but be sure to ask them to use pens that won't go through to the other side of the paper.

Our Latest Conference Program Design

Many teachers at our school now use a 17 x 11 inch light-colored tagboard sheet folded in the middle to create a booklet with four faces, each page 8 ½ x 11. This serves as the program for the conference and also the folder for the report card when it is sent home. Copies of several different designs are on the last pages of this book. You may find them helpful when you design your own programs. We use Forms 4 and 5 for the front and back of these folders.

Form 4

My Student-Led Parent Conference

a form to use for the front cover. Students draw a picture and print their teacher's name, school, their name and age, and the date.

Form 5

MY OWN REPORT CARD

I use this form for the back cover of the conference program. Students complete it with me during the week before the conferences, and parents discuss it with their children during the conference.

Form 6

A Little Feedback, Please

a form to send home to gather feedback about the conferences from parents

Form 7

My Student-Led Parent Conference

a form for students to draw and write about their conference