



## after any conference, you should

### **Record 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.

### **List the conclusions**

**reached**, as well as a plan for the next conference. 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 information that may help you teach the student more effectively.



## parent-teacher conferences

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Keeping the communications link between home and school open can help make things in your classroom run more smoothly. Please send your tips on how best to accomplish this to the Public Relations Department of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union in co-operation with the teachers of Atlantic Canada for inclusion in the next version of this brochure.

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## parent-teacher conferences

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### TIPS FOR TEACHERS

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Parent-Teacher conferences can improve communication and understanding between the home and the school, whether they're for reporting or other purposes. However, unless they're properly planned and carried out, they have the potential to lead to misunderstanding, confusion and even frustration. This brochure, prepared for you by the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, in co-operation with the teachers of Atlantic Canada, contains some suggestions for making the most of these valuable sessions.



## parent-teacher conferences

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### the REPORTING conference

One of the most valuable supplements to written report cards (or the more current computer print-outs), is the Parent-Teacher Conference. These one-on-one meetings are often the best way to inform parents about their child's progress while opening a good two-way communications channel.

## preparing to meet parents

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

### Make sure you know

- the student by name
- something positive about the student

### Prepare a check list and include:

- student's work habits
- day-to-day performance as related to capabilities
- social and emotional adjustments
- an outline of skills, concepts and topics from last term
- level of attainment for individual students

Such a list will help you answer specific questions and topics.

### Schedule your conference time

- give yourself a few moments between conferences to make notes on your previous meeting, and check notes for the next visitor

- stick to your timetable
- be polite but firm
- post a sign to alert parents to knock on the door at their allotted time
- re-schedule another meeting with parents who require more time to confer; pick a "quiet" day when you have more time to meet

### Be prepared to explain

Parents are often interested, but do not always understand or know about the school's programs and evaluation procedures.

- review anything you're not entirely certain of before the meeting
- if someone asks a question for which you do not have the answer, promise to respond within a specific and short period of time

### Prepare examples of the student's work

- discuss strengths and weaknesses
- show specific examples and relate to student's progress

## during the conference

**Start with a positive statement;** a favourable comment before discussion of the student's performance sets a good tone for the meeting. Ending with a positive comment is also a good idea.

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

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

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

**Suggest techniques parents can use,** but don't tell them what they have to do. Explain procedures that have worked in other cases and 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.** If parents refuse to acknowledge their child has a difficulty, it's useless to describe a solution for them. Additional examples and solutions can be discussed.

**Be prepared to limit discussion.** If a student has many difficulties, you might deal with one in-depth, rather than all 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 student 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-teacher conference should be treated as confidential.

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

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

**Thank parents** for taking time to come and meet with you. Make sure everyone knows whose responsibility it is to call the next meeting - you, the parents, or both.



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### the CRISIS conference

Parent-teacher conferences may have to be called by a teacher or parent to deal with an emerging concern or a particular incident. While guidelines for the reporting conference apply, here are 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.

★ Delay making definite suggestions yourself; instead, encourage the parents to offer suggestions.

★ Make plans together for future progress.

★ End the meeting on a positive note.