

Conducting Successful ELL Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conference nights are a great way to further build school-home connections. Ensuring that ELL families have successful experiences with parent-teacher conferences is challenging for several reasons, including language barriers, lack of familiarity with the US school system, and a misunderstanding of the purpose of parent-teacher conferences. Below are suggestions for steps to take both before and during parent-teacher conferences to make sure that the experience is equally successful for ELL families and school staff.

| Before | During |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Make sure you know which parents prefer which languages and have an interpretation plan in place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ You can download our directions for accessing free over-the-phone interpretation services HERE ✓ Ensure ELL parents know interpreters will be available at the conference ✓ Ensure translation of parent-facing documents (report cards, graduation requirements, etc.) ✓ Explain purpose of and expectations around parent-teacher conferences, which are foreign to many ELL families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ You can see a sample letter that we created HERE ✓ Research schooling practices in ELL families' home countries to better plan background information that you'll need to discuss at the conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For example, a family from France would be accustomed to a 1-20 points scale, not a 1-4 scale that many schools here use. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ If using an interpreter, have the interpreter introduce themselves and explain their neutral role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintain eye contact with parents, not with interpreters ✓ Start with an explanation of the purpose of the meeting and see if parents have any initial questions ✓ If applicable, have the student's ENL teacher present, as well ✓ Ask parents for their opinions about student progress and what their academic expectations are ✓ Set at least 3 next steps and provide rationale and resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For example, a parent who grew up with a different school system might not view daily attendance as a non-negotiable expectation. Explain why daily attendance is an important school-wide expectation and offer to help think through obstacles that sometimes prevent daily attendance. |