

This memo was written by the principal of Westminster Public School, Lillian Lahe, to guide teachers in their preparation for student-led conferences. It was also intended to ensure that the Student -led Conference process highlight their work in Critical Literacy and Assessment. The memo helped define the roles of students, staff and parents, and then identified the components of the portfolio.

Westminster SEF and IS/SMART Goals

Student-Led Conferences will highlight our important work!

Student-led conferences provide an opportunity for engaging our students in the assessment of and for their learning. It highlights our assessment practices and our focus for learning at Westminster. ***Note: We are beyond 'What is easy for me...or What is hard for me...' The process, portfolio and student dialogue is specifically around our important work. The portfolio will be the opportunity for students to display their best work. Our classrooms will showcase our high expectations. Our students will model for parents the instructional practices that have enabled them to revise and improve their work based on specific and timely teacher feedback.

Teacher's Role:

- Ensure that classroom walls support and assist the student-led conference presentation, e.g. numerous samples of student work throughout the term, student work posted with descriptive feedback, mentor texts,
 - Various Text Forms.....(persuasive, narrative, recount)
 - Reading for 'Author's Message'
 - Writing with a 'Message in Mind'
 - Critical Literacy in all content areas, e.g. Social Studies, History
 - Mathematics Problem Solving
- Ensure that specific and in-depth learning intentions and success criteria are posted in the classroom and that students understand and can speak to the learning intentions and success criteria
- Ensure that achievement targets have been clearly defined, woven into the instruction, and used as the basis for an open and honest ongoing communication system
- Ensure that the portfolios include an accurate snapshot of the student's learning and include sufficient samples to provide a comprehensive overview of the term's work
- Avoid getting students to write their self evaluations, as their thinking will be reduced to what is easy to write and no reading
- Option to have students share their thinking, or communicate about their learning and goals for improvement, in their first language with their peers or parents
- Encourage parents to use their first language in the Student-Led Conference if using English would limit the potential experience
- Prepare and scaffold students for their leadership role as presenters of their portfolios (e.g. appropriate language and samples)

Student's Role:

- Works with the teacher to compile the Portfolio in preparation for the Student-Led Conference
- Is able to explain to the parents the significance of the Portfolio and the Student-Led Conference Process
- Takes leadership in explaining what has been the learning focus within the classroom
- Presents and explains their own learning progress in both what and how they learn
- Explain each piece of work in relation to the Learning Target and what each piece illustrates about their own learning.
- Explain where they are at in relation to meeting the criteria or their learning goal
- Key players in developing future goals
- Partners in completing a growth plan with the teacher and parents

Parent's Role:

- Discuss with their child and ask questions to clarify what and how their child is learning
- Partner in completing a growth plan with the student and teacher
- Contribute to the Page 3 of the report card
- Parents will be encouraged to request students to **explain** their learning in relation to specific pieces of work, as follows:
 - What are you learning in this subject area?
 - How are you learning it?
 - How did you come to this answer?
- Complete a response sheet to document their input (e.g. 2 stars and a wish)

Components of the Portfolio:

- Multiple Samples of work to reflect our school focus (SMART Goals)
 - Various Text Forms.....(persuasive, narrative, recounts)
 - Reading for 'Author's Message'
 - Writing with a 'Message in Mind'
 - Critical Literacy in all content areas, e.g. Social Studies, History
 - Mathematics problem solving
- Clear learning Intentions and success criteria
- Samples of work including written descriptive feedback (based on criteria)
- Work samples to include not only what students learn, but how students learn
- Written documentation of future goals with opportunity for student, teacher and parent input (Note: this needs to include the learning targets and specific areas for improvement, a time frame, and what the specific evidence might be for achieving the goal).

Good descriptive feedback is an essential component of the student-led conference process. The following are essential:

- Describe specific qualities of the work in relation to the learning targets
- Make observations about students' learning processes and strategies that will help them figure out how to improve
- Foster student self-efficacy by drawing connections between students' work and their mindful, intentional efforts
- Remember the importance of 'process' success criteria
- The focus needs to be on the learning, not on the activity (e.g. gluing or coloring)
- Do not use personal comments
- Strategic Focused feedback: a praise point for something specific on the posted success criteria and a prompt for something you're going to change together

Shirley Clarke

Peer editing or feedback from peers can also be used. The following is essential:

- Read your peer's work carefully
- Compare the work with the rubric and mentor text
- Talk about the work, not the person
- Don't judge (e.g., don't say, "That's bad");, rather, describe what you think is good about the work and what's missing or could be done better.
- Make specific suggestions.
- Tell what you think, and then ask what the author thinks

How to Give Effective Feedback to your Student, S.M. Brookhart