

# The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat Webcast Professional Learning Series

Viewer's Guide

# Student-led Conferences

Multimedia resource for professional learning



Curriculum  
Services  
Canada

Service des  
programmes  
d'études Canada

reach every student

 Ontario

## On this DVD you will find ...

- Select “Featured Webcast: Play All” in order to access video files formatted to play from a regular DVD player or from your computer’s DVD drive.
- Open the folder Video Resources to access Windows Media Video (WMV) and QuickTime (MOV) files formatted for downloading from your computer’s DVD drive and using in your PowerPoint presentations; also contains PDF files of key print resources.
- Open the folder Print Resources to access PDF files of the Viewer’s Guide, Print Resources, Support Materials and related articles. The booklet entitled “Viewer’s Guide” offers a snapshot of the webcast segments.

### Webcast Segments

#### Overview

#### Student-led Conferences

- Grade 3 Conferences
- Grade 6 Conferences
- Grade 7/8 Conferences

#### Informing Practice

- VoiceThread
- Classroom Tour
- Learning Intentions and Success Criteria
- Process Portfolios

#### Perspectives

- Principal
- Literacy Coach
- Teachers

### Print and Video Resources

- Viewer’s Guide and Print Resources 1–4 (PDF)
- Teacher Support Materials (PDF)
- Student Self-Assessment Monograph (PDF)
- Video Files (WMV and MOV)

Funded by the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, Ministry of Education.

# Table of Contents

<b>Overview</b>	2
<b>Student-led Conferences</b>	4
Grade 3 Conferences	6
Grade 6 Conferences	8
Grade 7/8 Conferences	9
<b>Informing Practice</b>	12
VoiceThread	12
Classroom Tour	12
Learning Intentions and Success Criteria	12
Process Portfolios	13
<b>Perspectives</b>	13
Principal	14
Literacy Coach	15
Teachers	15
<b>Recap</b>	17
<b>Related Reading</b>	17
<b>Technical Instructions</b>	18
How to Access the Print and Video Resources	18
How to Save the Video Files to Your Computer	19
How to Insert Video Clips (WMV files) into a PowerPoint Presentation	20

## Overview

Student-led conferences offer authentic opportunities for students to share their learning with their parents/caregivers. They engage and motivate both students and parents to participate enthusiastically in the teaching-learning process. Student-led conferences strengthen the relationship between home and school and also bring students and parents closer together. Students feel empowered to take ownership of their learning and teachers receive valuable feedback that impacts on their instructional decision making. Parents see their children through a new lens – in action in their classroom environment – and gain insight into their thinking and behaviour.

Research and experience reveal the following as benefits of student-led conferences:

- greater accountability in students for their own learning
- increased pride in achievement among students
- increased confidence by students to take on leadership roles
- increased learning independence in students
- more positive student-teacher relationships
- increased parental participation in school life
- improved communication with parents, resulting in deeper understanding of and confidence in what happens at school

Kinney, Patti. (2005) *Letting Students Take the Lead*.  
Principal Leadership, p.35.

One of the main goals of education is to help students become independent learners and competent communicators who are eager to participate in society and make the world a better place. Such students and future citizens need to be aware of their own strengths and needs. They need to be self-motivated problem solvers and action-oriented, creative thinkers. Preparing for and participating in student-led conferences teaches students to be reflective, to self-assess, to set goals and to communicate effectively.

A block of time is scheduled for the conference. The student actively leads the conference and is accountable for effectively sharing evidence of his/her learning. Students feel safe because the teacher is present in the room to assist on an as-needed basis. Several conferences may be in progress at the same time. The environment is safe and welcoming.

Students learn to assess, select, reflect on and talk about the work in their portfolios. As students prepare for the conference, they learn to monitor their own progress and refer to the task-related learning intentions

and success criteria to guide them. They collect artifacts that demonstrate their learning and set goals to move their learning forward. The work samples take many forms, including photographs, recordings, video clips and print, and may be assembled for sharing in a variety of ways, including the traditional portfolio or an electronic folder.

Students choose what work to share and how to share it with their parents. They have many opportunities to practise various conference roles with their peers, younger students and the teacher. Because they are sharing with a real audience, students are motivated to do their best. All of the learning in preparation for the conference is relevant and authentic. Plenty of time for talk and interaction helps students become comfortable taking the lead and talking about their learning.

During the conference, parents/caregivers are empowered as partners in the education of their children. Student-led conferences strengthen the relationship between home and school. Parents discover what their child is learning and how he/she is learning. They also discover their child's perception of him/herself as a learner and how they might help their child at home.

The collaboration among staff, students and parents leading up to the conference builds a common understanding and common language relating to assessment and learning and results in a deeper understanding of the teaching-learning process. Parents and students develop a common vocabulary to discuss the learning. Students learn how to set goals and use success criteria to monitor their progress. They also learn how to communicate their ideas effectively. The assessment becomes the learning, and the feedback that occurs throughout the process and during the conference itself becomes an important component that drives the learning forward.

At the end of the conference, parents are asked to complete a reflection form. This form helps teachers and students assess the effectiveness of the conference. Based on the reflections, issues are discussed in relation to improving next year's conference experience.

This webcast offers a glimpse of student-led conferences through the perspectives of one elementary school's teachers, students, parents, principal and support staff. We thank them for so generously sharing their experiences with us.

*Mary Jean Gallagher is the Chief Student Achievement Officer of Ontario and the Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Achievement Division, Ministry of Education.*

# Student-led Conferences

*Learning about learning* is one of the major concepts addressed in this resource.

Working as a group or individually think about *learning*.

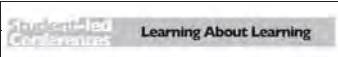
On a large piece of paper draw a Venn diagram of three intersecting circles. Label each circle with one of the following titles:

- *engagement*,
- *social learning*,
- *metacognition*.

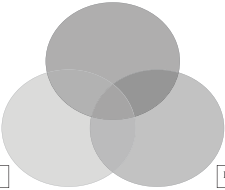
As you watch the various segments of this webcast:

- *jot down key ideas, each on a different sticky note,*
- *place sticky notes on the appropriate part of the Venn diagram,*  
*like ideas should be placed on top of one another.*

Print Resource 1



Social Learning



Metacognition                      Engagement

Working as a group or individually think about *learning*.

On a large piece of paper draw a Venn diagram of three intersecting circles. Label each circle with one of the following titles:

- *engagement*,
- *social learning*,
- *metacognition*

As you watch the various segments of this webcast:

- *jot down key ideas, each on a different sticky note,*
- *place sticky notes on the appropriate part of the Venn diagram*  
*like ideas should be placed on top of one another.*

What did you learn about learning through viewing this resource?

How will this knowledge influence or change your practice?

What did you learn about learning through viewing this resource?


How will this knowledge influence or change your practice?

## Key Ideas – Print Resource 2

1. How would you make student-led conferencing an integral part of the learning process?
2. This webcast illustrates key messages that connect student-led conferences to authentic learning. Consider how these key messages improve student learning and thinking and result in informed actions.

Share ideas with your colleagues as you complete the chart below.

Print Resource 2

**Key Ideas**

1. How would you make student-led conferencing an integral part of the learning process?
2. This webcast illustrates key messages that connect student-led conferences to authentic learning. Consider how these key messages improve student learning and thinking and result in informed actions.

Share ideas with your colleagues as you complete the chart below.

Key Ideas explored through the Student-led Conference experience	Improvement in Student Learning	Improvement in Student Thinking	Informed Actions by students, teachers, parents, principal
Learning About Learning			
Student Voice and Engagement			
Parent Voice and Engagement			
Home School Connections			
Student-led Conferences a school-wide practice			
Power of Social Learning			
Inquiry and Reflection			

# Grade 3 Conferences

## Overview

In these segments, we see that the students are highly involved in the assessment process. They clearly understand the concept of learning intentions and success criteria, and they can talk about their work and themselves as learners. Descriptive feedback plays an important role in helping students know what they need to do in order to improve.

- *Describe how you would teach students to receive and act upon descriptive feedback.*
- *How would you support students in learning how to give themselves descriptive feedback to move their learning forward?*

## Student-led Conferences

### Conference One:

This clip illustrates the process portfolio as a tool for the student to use during the conference. It contains an organized selection of evidence of learning along with assessments and student reflections. There are also many organizers to guide students in managing the contents of the portfolio.

- *How would you prepare your students to share evidence of their learning?*
- *How will you determine if students are sharing their ideas clearly and appropriately during the conference?*

### Conference Two:

Descriptive feedback from the teacher and peers is important in preparing for the conference.

- *How would you prepare your students to be able to self-assess and to give effective descriptive feedback to their peers?*
- *How would you prepare students to know how to respond to peer feedback?*

### Conference Three:

Success criteria are collaboratively constructed by students and teachers and are posted in the classroom for students to reference as needed.

- *How do success criteria benefit students, teachers and parents?*

### Conference Four:

When students articulate their learning, they consolidate their thinking. As they learn to express themselves, they are developing their communication skills and strengthening their understanding.

- *What prior experiences would students need to have in order to successfully lead a conference?*

### Student Reflections

Students in this clip share their feelings about being nervous prior to the conference.

- *How would you help students develop confidence in themselves as leaders of the conference?*

### Parent Reflections

Participating in the student-led conference clarified for these parents how their child was being taught and assessed. They were able to see the classroom environment and to hear how their child felt about his/her learning. The parents made powerful links to how this classroom experience was preparing students for the future.

- *What strategies would you use to help your students' parents arrive at this level of understanding?*

The comments shared during this round-table discussion revealed very insightful responses to the conference experience.

- *What actions do you think the teacher and students took to set the stage for such a positive conference experience for parents?*
- *What would be your next steps, if you were the teacher?*

# Grade 6 Conferences

## Overview

Students are encouraged to share their strengths and needs with their parents/caregivers. They take the lead during the conference.

- *How would you prepare students to take the lead during the conference.*
- *What actions would you take to monitor the quality of the conversation occurring during each conference?*

## Student-led Conferences

### Conference One:

The student in this clip clearly articulates her views about herself as a learner and about her work. The conference is conducted both in English and in the family's first language. This creates a safe environment for the participants. The student reflects on several experiences leading up to the conference that set all participants up for success.

- *How will you know that the strategies you use to prepare students and parents for their student-led conference are working?*
- *Parents and students will be building new understandings about the teaching-learning process during the conference. How will you address possible misconceptions that might occur when you are not part of the conversation?*

### Conference Two:

Research shows that offering choice and building on student interests improves student achievement. The student in this clip describes how writing in his journal has changed his attitude toward writing.

- *How is choice built into the student-led conference experience?*

### Conference Three:

Actively involving parents in the conference encourages a true partnership between home and school.

- *How can teachers continue to strengthen the relationship between home and school?*

# Grade 7/8 Conferences

## Overview

When students realize the relevance of what they are learning, they become motivated to do their very best work. They become fully engaged in the learning and assessment process and are eager to share their progress with their parents/caregivers.

- *Students select what to share with their parents. How will you prepare students to make wise choices that show their growth over time?*

The integration of technology throughout the teaching-learning-assessment process allowed all students to participate. It was highly effective as a means of communicating within and beyond the classroom and between home and school.

- *How would you use technology as a tool for differentiation in order to prepare all students for a successful conference experience?*

## Student-led Conferences

### Conference One:

This student-parent conference is led by the student, and the teacher is available to meet with parents as well and to intervene as needed. The student feels empowered and confident. In this clip, you will observe a teacher participating briefly in the conference. As he walks around the classroom, he notices that this student needs assistance. The intervention is brief and respectful, and control is given back to the student as soon as possible.

- *What would you, the teacher, be looking and listening for as an indication of when to slip into the conversation?*

The student is using technology to demonstrate his learning. This same technology was used by the teacher to model the task, by the student to complete the task, by teacher and students to assess the task, and by the student to demonstrate his learning to his parents during the conference.

The purposeful integration of technology throughout the teaching-learning process allows for multiple applications of the student's new learning.

- *How does this approach support the concept of assessment as learning?*
- *What is the advantage of this approach to the teacher and to the student?*

### Conference Two:

One of the goals of student-led conferences is to guide students to become independent, motivated learners who value and understand their learning beyond its relation to the marks they earn. In this clip, the student begins to discuss her work with a focus on marks. The teacher notices this and decides to gently enter the conversation.

- *What does this teacher need to consider as he joins the conference to redirect the conversation?*

### Conference Three:

During this conference, the student clearly articulates the impact of technology on her learning. She also reflects on her strengths and needs, determines specific next steps for improvement, and involves her parents in deciding how they can assist. The student in this clip is very aware of herself as a learner and she recognizes the value of what she is learning in terms of her future success.

- *What learning opportunities do you think the teacher provided in order to help this student reach this level of understanding?*

### Student Reflections

Students learned about their parents, parents learned about their child, and teachers learned about their students and the students' parents. When participants reflected on their new learning, they decided how to move forward with student-led conferences.

- *What would you do to monitor and support thoughtful actions taken following the conference?*
- *What key learning would you expect to occur as a result of the student-led conference experience?*
- *How would you determine whether this key learning actually happened?*

## Parent Reflections

The parents/caregivers in this clip appreciated that the teacher was accessible during the conference. It was clear that they valued the conference experience and that they gained new insights into their children as learners. They also expressed what surprised them about their children during the conference.

The teacher was very intentional in his preparation for the conference in order to make sure that the needs of his students' parents/caregivers were met.

- *How would you set up parents/caregivers for success?*

Parents in this segment recognize their children's growing independence. They comment on how the conference experience prepares their children for future learning. The responses are very positive.

- *What do you think this teacher will do to move the learning forward based on this feedback?*

# Informing Practice

## VoiceThread

VoiceThread is a free online forum for sharing ideas, work and information within and beyond the classroom. The teacher featured in this video uses VoiceThread to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students. He also invites his students' parents to give feedback related to their child's writing.

Parents are informed about the student-led conference session through VoiceThread and are invited to give feedback related to the conference, using VoiceThread.

- *VoiceThread benefits all stakeholders. How would you use this program to further engage your students and their parents in school life?*

## Classroom Tour

This Grade 3 classroom supports student learning through information posted on anchor charts, rich and varied texts, and displays that celebrate student thinking and learning. Materials are organized and accessible, and routines that support independent learning are well established.

- *What ideas presented in this clip will you introduce to your staff and students?*

## Learning Intentions and Success Criteria

The teacher in this Grade 7/8 classroom speaks about the importance of establishing learning intentions and co-creating success criteria to support student learning by clarifying goals and describing what success looks like. Establishing learning intentions and success criteria helps students to self-assess and become more independent.

- *How do learning intentions and success criteria benefit the student, the teacher and the parent/caregiver?*
- *What actions will you take to introduce this concept to your colleagues and in to your own practice?*

## Process Portfolios

Students are involved in self-assessment throughout the year. They discover how they learn best, what their strengths and needs are, and how to plan for their own improvement. Students also learn how to assess their own work. This experience helps students become more independent. Students keep a process portfolio as evidence of their growth over time.

- *How would you help students learn how to use their process portfolio to monitor their learning and set next steps for improvement?*

This teacher created many organizers to assist students in managing their portfolios. Students also have an understanding of the vocabulary necessary to discuss their work.

- *How would you help students learn how to manage and use their portfolios to move their learning forward?*

## Perspectives

If the learning intention is that all students take the lead during the conference and communicate effectively about their work and themselves as learners...

**THEN** what role do parents, teachers, principals and students play in students successfully accomplishing the learning intention?

Students: *What do students need to know, understand, and be able to do in order to achieve the above learning intention?*

Teachers: *What do teachers need to know, understand, and be able to do in order to support students to achieve the above learning intention?*

Principals: *What do principals need to know, understand, and be able to do in order to support teachers to achieve the above learning intention?*

Parents: *What do parents need to know, understand, and be able to do in order to support students and teachers to achieve the above learning intention?*

You may wish to use the Print Resource 3 diagram on the DVD as a starting point for your thinking.

Print Resource 3

## Student-led Conferences

## Exploring Learning Relationships

**IF** the learning intention is that all students take the lead and communicate effectively with their parents/caregivers during the conference about their work and themselves as learners,

**THEN** what role do parents, teachers, principals and students play in students successfully accomplishing the learning intention?

Use the diagram below as a starting point for your thinking. Enlarge, change and add details to the diagram to illustrate your thinking about the relationships between each member of the learning community in supporting students to successfully accomplish the learning intention.

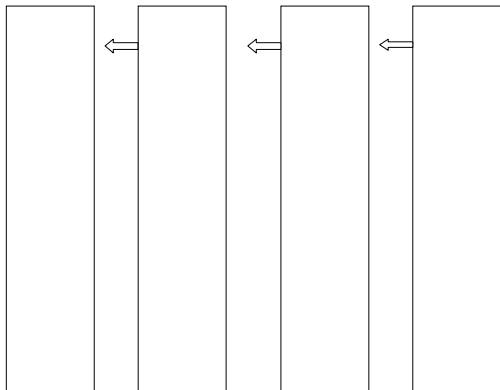
### Learning Intention

**Student**

**Teacher**

**Principal**

**Parents**



## Principal

Communication with parents/caregivers is essential in order to prepare all participants for a successful conference experience.

- *What actions will you and your staff take to communicate effectively with your parent community in order to actively involve them in student-led conferences?*

Planning collaboratively for the student-led conference session with the entire staff beginning in early September ensures that everyone involved has a common understanding of the goals of the conference experience and of the suggested strategies to meet those goals.

- *How might you facilitate communication among and between grade-level teams regarding the details of preparing students and parents for the conference?*

The principal plays a key role in making the student-led conference a successful experience for all participants. Aligning the goals of the student-led conferences with those of the School Effectiveness Framework and the School Improvement Plan is essential.

- *How would you facilitate this alignment?*

## Literacy Coach

Throughout this resource, one of the major themes highlighted is *learning about learning*. All participants learned through their preparation for and participation in the conference.

- *What measures would you take to ensure that the conference experience is inclusive of all parents and students?*

## Teachers

Teachers reflect on this year's student-led conference experiences in order to capture thoughts related to improving next year's conference. The teachers speak of developing skills for future learning through the conference experience.

- *Which ideas expressed by this group of teachers will have an impact on your practice?*
- *What actions will you take to involve all staff in planning next steps after the student-led conference sessions?*

This resource presents many points of view regarding the benefits of student-led conferences. You may wish to use Print Resource 4 on the DVD as an organizer for your thoughts about the benefits of student-led conferences.

Print Resource 4

Student-led  
Conferences

## Points of View

### What's your point of view?

Throughout this resource many points of view are presented regarding the benefits of student-led conferences.

Jot down the various responses to the benefits of student-led conferences that you heard as you viewed this resource

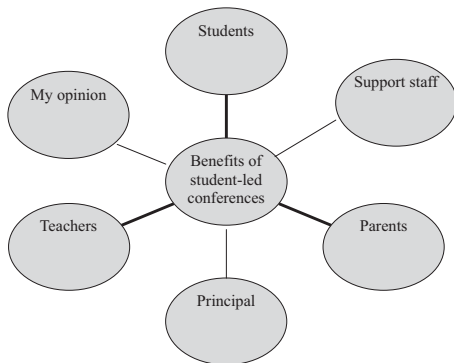
Add your own perspective based on viewing this resource and your personal experiences.

Whose perspective is missing?

What issues might exist that need to be addressed in order to make the conference experience a positive one for all members of the learning community?

Use the format below to organize your thinking about the benefits of student-led conferences.

### Benefits of Student-Led Conferences



## Recap

As you view this resource, you will see students competently leading the student-parent conference.

- *What would a student need to know, do and understand in order to successfully lead a student-parent conference?*
- *Describe the effective teaching practices that lead to this level of achievement.*
- *What would a teacher need to know, do and understand in order to prepare students for a successful conference?*

A student-led conference is a culminating task that requires students to self-assess and communicate their learning to others. During the process of preparing for the conference, students learn how to reflect on their work and on themselves as learners. They discover how to give and receive feedback and how to communicate effectively. These skills are transferable throughout school and to their future lives. Student-led conferences are an authentic example of assessment as learning.

All stakeholders learned through the student-led conference experience. Many students and parents expressed how their thinking changed as a result of the conference.

- *Identify the most significant learning you heard during your viewing from the parents, the students, the principal or the teachers.*
- *How will this information impact on your thinking and your practice?*

## Related Reading

To view a variety of books and articles related to Student-led Conferences, please log onto: <http://books.google.ca> and enter 'Student-led Conferences' in the Search Books browser.

# Technical Instructions

## How to Access the Print and Video Resources

To access the **Print and Video Resources** folder in Windows, insert the DVD into the DVD drive of your computer.

1. Click on the Start menu.
2. Select My Computer.
3. Right-click the mouse on the DVD icon titled **STUDENT\_LED\_CONFERENCEES\_DVD** to open a drop-down options list.
4. From the drop-down list, select and click on the Open option.
5. Double-click on the folder titled Print and Video Resources to access the files within. Ignore the folders titled Audio\_TS and Video\_TS.
6. Select the resources you wish to use directly from this folder, **OR** Copy onto the Desktop and open files from the Desktop.

Alternatively, when the DVD is inserted and the options box opens:

1. Select the option Open Folder to View Files.
2. Click on the Print and Video Resources folder.
3. Select the files you wish to use directly from this folder, **OR** Copy the files onto the Desktop and open them from the Desktop.

To access the **Print and Video Resources** folder in Mac OS X, insert the DVD into the DVD drive of your computer and:

1. Exit from the DVD player (which typically opens automatically when a DVD is inserted in the drive).
2. Double-click on the DVD icon titled **STUDENT\_LED\_CONFERENCEES\_DVD**.
3. Select the files you wish to use directly from this folder, **OR** Copy the files onto the Desktop and open them from the Desktop.



## How to Save the Video Files to Your Computer

The video files can all be copied and saved to your computer using either of the following methods for copying and pasting files.

### *Method 1*

1. Right-click on the file and choose the Copy option.
2. Right-click within any computer folder into which you would like to save the file, and choose the Paste option.

### *Method 2*

1. Left-click the mouse on the file you want to save, so that the file is highlighted.
2. Simultaneously press the Ctrl and C keys (or, for Macintosh users, the Command and C keys) to copy the file.
3. Left-click within any computer folder in which you would like to save the file, and simultaneously press the Ctrl and V keys (or, for Macintosh users, the Command and V keys) to paste the file there.
  - For Macintosh users, the Command key is the one with the following symbols:  

### **NOTE:**

If you want to insert video files into a PowerPoint presentation, you must save these video files in the same folder that contains your PowerPoint file. If you save a PowerPoint presentation to another location (e.g., a memory stick, CD-ROM, etc.), you must also save the video files in the same location in order for the video to play. So, if you transfer the presentation to another computer, you must also transfer the video files with it, or else the video will not link to the PowerPoint presentation.

## How to Insert Video Clips (WMV and MOV files) into a PowerPoint Presentation

On this DVD you will find WMV and MOV versions of all segments of the webcast. To insert a clip into a PowerPoint presentation, follow the directions below:

1. Open your PowerPoint program.
2. Create a new PowerPoint presentation **OR** open an existing PowerPoint presentation, and within it, open the slide on which you would like to add the video.
3. Insert the webcast DVD into the DVD drive of your computer.
4. If a new window opens asking how you would like to view the files on the disk, choose the option Open Folder to View Files; **OR**  
If a new window does not open, open the My Computer window from the Start menu. In the My Computer window, double-click on the icon that is shaped like a disk, which will likely be labelled D: or E:.
5. Save the video segment that you want to insert in a PowerPoint into the same folder that contains your PowerPoint presentation.  
**NOTE:** Video files that have been saved to your computer can be cropped and edited into smaller segments using Movie Maker (free on PCs) or iMovie (free on Macintosh).
6. Open the PowerPoint slide on which you would like to insert the video, and click on the Insert menu in the PowerPoint menu bar.
7. From the Insert menu, select Movies and Sounds, and click on the Movie from File option.
8. A window opens, prompting you to select the video file that you would like to add. Find and select the video file that you saved in step 5.
9. Once you have chosen the video file you need, another window opens and asks whether you want your movie to play either automatically when you enter the slide, or only when it is clicked. Choose your preference.  
(You will notice that the starting image of your movie is not displayed on the slide.)

To order the multimedia package **Student-led Conferences**, contact ServiceOntario at 416-326-5300 or toll-free at 1-800-668-9938.  
<http://www.publications.serviceontario.ca/ecom>

The webcast segments and related resources are also accessible online at  
<http://www.curriculum.org/secretariat/studentled/index.shtml>



Printed on recycled paper  
ISBN 978-1-4435-2711-8 (Kit)  
© Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2010