



New Teacher Newsletter

End of the 1st Nine Weeks

You did it! You survived the first 9 weeks of school! For those of you who are actually beginning teachers, it may feel as though you've been thrown into a reality show. For those who are not beginning teachers but in your first year with the county, you know what that means. The good news is that you have found your comfort zone in your classroom and have established a great relationship with your students. You have found those initially foreign people in your class to be bright, funny and dynamic individuals who can make you grin just when you think you are going to lose it.

Although you have experienced many of the "firsts" there are more to come including Parent Teacher Conferences. This New Teacher Newsletter will provide some helpful tips to surviving Parent Teacher Conferences and assist in making it a pleasant experience for you as well as the parents with whom you meet. I hope you will take a few minutes to read over these tips and feel free to contact one of your building mentors or either of the county-wide mentors if you have ANY questions.



Don't be an imposing figure behind the desk during Parent Teacher Conferences.

Parent Conferences

Parent Conferences provide an opportunity for teachers to establish positive and productive relationships with parents of whom you have not had contact. There are several things teachers can do to make the experience positive for all involved. As a professional, make sure that you are prepared and dressed appropriately to reduce nervousness for you and the parent.

Preparation

Conferences are about student learning not rules and regulations. Have student work available to show parents and provide information about rules and expectations for them to read later. Develop a plan to show parents their student's grades without showing them other students' grades in your grade book. If you have made recent long-term assignments such as a project or paper, provide a copy of the assignment and rubric so that they are aware of your expectations!

The Environment

Remember, every parent was once a student and their experiences were not always positive. Create an environment in your room that is welcoming and open to parents. Make sure that your room is neat and organized. If you have calendars visible, make sure they are up-to-date and that bulletin boards are fresh and contribute to the culture of the classroom. Place several chairs or desks together away from your desk in order to remove any physical barriers. Provide appropriate size chairs for parents; asking them to sit in primary size chairs creates an uncomfortable situation

When There is a Problem

No parent sends their child to school in hopes that they learn nothing. We should make parents our partners in educating children. If there are problems with a student, be specific. Do not make generalizations. If a student doesn't turn in homework on a regular basis but has turned some in, do not tell the parent "Jane never turns in homework." Tell the parent that "Jane doesn't turn in homework consistently." Be prepared to back up anything you say with evidence through actual student work and/or your grade book.

Listen to what the parent says. Probe them through questioning and paraphrase to clarify for understanding. Remember to focus on solutions and collaboration.



During the Conference

- Be aware of your body language
- Open the conference on a positive note
- Ask for their opinions and ideas throughout the conference
- Focus on solutions and emphasize collaboration
- Make sure you get correct phone numbers and/or an email address for follow-up

After the Conference

After the conference, make sure that you follow-up with any parent requests. If you agree to provide progress reports or phone calls to report certain behaviors, make sure that you do so in a timely manner. If progress is made in a problem situation, be sure and report that progress.

Difficult Situations

Try to identify the cause of the problem and match your intervention to the perceived cause.

If you are a parent, empathize as a parent.

Ask what has worked in the past.

Use inclusive language such as "what can we do" and "do you see what I see."

Ask for suggestions from the parent.

Do not give unsolicited advice.

Upcoming Events

Parent Teacher Conferences, Elementary Schools, 3:15-6:15 p.m. – October 22

Parent Teacher Conferences, Middle Schools, 3:15-6:15 p.m. – October 23

Parent Teacher Conferences, High Schools, 3:15-6:15 p.m. – October 25

Tipton County College & Career Night, Brighton High, 5:30-7:30 p.m. – October 25

Parent Teacher Conferences, all schools, 3:15-6:15 p.m. – October 30

EXPLORE Test, all 8th grade students and PLAN Test, all 10th grade students – November 6

County-wide New Teacher Meeting at MES, 3:30, November 13

In-service, all schools, 3:15-6:15 p.m. - November 15, 2005

Thanksgiving Holidays – November 19-23

County-wide Mentors

Dorothy Davidson - PK-5th grade
475-3479

Marion Samuel - Middle & High Schools
475-5994

For additional resources on Parent Teacher Conferences go to <http://www.tipton-county.com/instctr/newteacher>.