



The Kindergarten Chronicles

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Conference Time

My how time flies! It is hard to believe that parent-teacher conferences are here. This is the time that sparks feelings of anxiety and excitement from both parents and teachers. Parents come to conferences hoping that their child's teacher sees all of the good that they see in their child. Parents bring with them their past school experiences: positive and negative. Teachers feel apprehensive as to how parents will accept assessment results and recommendations for their child. The key is to make the conference a sharing time of the student's strengths and weaknesses in order to create a partnership between home and school. As a result, the best interest of the student remains the focus of the conference. Below are some tips for conferring with parents:

- Start the conference with a positive comment about the student. "Tommy is such a great helper at school! I can tell this is something you must see everyday at home." Who doesn't want to hear praise for their child?
- Provide parents with concrete statements about their child. "Tina struggles with reading" is vague. "We have been learning the sounds of the letters m, s, d, a, and p. Tina knows the sound for m." The second example is more specific for a parent to understand and

act upon.

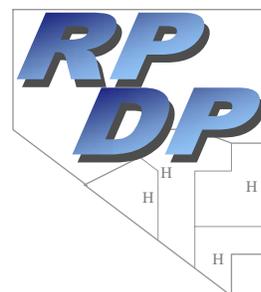
- Solicit support from parents for a plan of action. "Tina's small literacy group will continue practicing these sounds. Would you be able to play this sound game with Tina each night?" This gives the parents a partnership in the teaching process. Parents know when their child is struggling and many times are looking for ways to help.
- Ask parents to relay any of their concerns or questions. Be aware of your nonverbal communication cues and those of the parent. Actively listen to the parents as they know their child better than we do.
- Be sure to end the conference on a positive note. If parents leave feeling good about the conference, they will be more apt to try your suggestions at home. They may also be more eager to share future questions, concerns, and relevant information concerning their child.
- Call parents that cannot attend a face-to-face conference. Communication via telephone is better than no communication at all.

Enjoy this time meeting parents and sharing the amazing learning that happens throughout the kindergarten year.

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Bill Hanlon, Director

Food for Thought

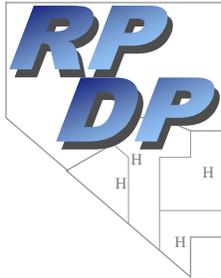
Sitting side by side with the parent, as opposed to across the table, conveys equality and partnership.

"Children are our most valuable natural resource."

- Herbert Hoover

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Favorite Authors and Their Websites:

- Mem Fox - www.memfox.com
- Tomie dePaola - www.tomie.com
- Jan Brett - www.janbrett.com
- Dr. Seuss - www.seussville.com
- Eric Carle - www.eric-carle.com

Spring GRIP-K Classes

You received a flyer a few weeks ago containing information on upcoming GRIP-K classes. There are a few openings in both the Monday evening class being held at Goolsby ES and the Tuesday evening class being held at Ries ES. Register on Pathlore.

Author Studies

Author studies are a wonderful way to engage students in the joy of reading. Many kindergarten students believe authors and illustrators to be magical people that exist in a world unlike ours. Perhaps many visualize them as characters such as the Cat in the Hat. Introducing kindergarteners to authors through the use of author studies opens new doors of understanding that "real" people write and illustrate books. This thought alone inspires students to dream of becoming famous authors and artists.

Most early readers have limited schema for specific authors, types of texts, and different text features. Conducting author studies allows you to introduce these concepts to your students in a fun and meaningful way. Children need to be taught how to activate their prior knowledge when they encounter a book by a favorite author. Paulette Bourgeois, the au-

thor of the *Franklin the Turtle* series, has written many books in which kindergarten students can relate. Bourgeois' belief that "it is important to look for the wonder in ordinary things" makes her books easy for students to have connections. Bourgeois uses childhood memories and reflects back on how she felt and reacted as a child as inspiration for her stories. Whether it's being afraid of a thunderstorm, feeling sad about a friend moving away, or not wanting to share, students can connect to the character of Franklin and what he's facing.

I usually begin my author studies by introducing four to five books by a selected author. After previewing the books, we read any author information provided on the book jackets. A picture of the author is always

cause for excitement. The next step is to find the author's website. Websites contain a variety of information on the author. My students love to find that many authors write about their experiences when they were small. Tomie dePaola's book, *The Art Lesson*, so excited one of my students



that he went home and told his family that we was going to be an artist.

In addition to learning about authors and illustrators, students hone their comprehension skills as

they compare, analyze, and synthesize information about an author's style. These skills are demonstrated as students make relevant text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections.

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