Implementing Student Led Conferences

By Educator Barnes – November 8, 2021

Traditional school conferences involve the parent and teacher discussing the progress of the student. Sometimes the child is not present. Not only should the child be present, but it is also possible for the child to lead the conference. These conferences are known as student led conferences (SLCs). They are best suited for secondary students although upper elementary students could also lead their conferences.

The key to SLCs is preparation. Just like the teacher has to plan for meeting with parents, students need time to prepare to talk about their progress with their parents. Teachers should determine which information students should share with their parents in addition to their

grades. This information could include NWEA results, reading level, behavior, and goals the students have set. This information can be stored in a physical folder or in an electronic folder such as Google drive.

Students should be provided with guidelines on what to say. This could be a script or a list of items to cover. The documents the students share with their parents should be listed in the order they will present the information to avoid wasting time. Students need the opportunity to practice. This could take place during homework where the students take turns practicing with the teacher.

The teacher should contact parents to have them sign-up for a time for the conference. Teachers should also ask students to tell their parents. If there is time for the teacher to work this in, students can write a postcard or note inviting their parents to the conference to give it a personal touch.

When the conference takes place, the teacher should be there. Some schools have multiple SLCs happening in each classroom and the teacher floats around answering any follow-up questions. In other models, SLCs do not happen at the same time and the teacher is there for the duration of each SLC.

The most important reason teachers and school leaders should shift to SLCs is to put ownership on the student. Students should have an active role in looking at their data and reporting their progress to their parents. Students should always be aware of how they are doing, and they should be the ones to communicate especially if they are not hitting the mark due to their own actions. The work of conferences should involve three parties: teachers, parents, and students.