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EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHING: From Easing Stress to Increasing Engagement

The Power of Family-Teacher Conferences in ECE: *Understanding the Key Aspects*

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**Our presenters**

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**Carrie Scruggs**  
SFL ECE Consultant

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Webinar Facilitator  
Director, ECE Initiatives  
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Webinar Support  
ECE Consultant  
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Assisting today's presenters

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### Today's Objectives

- Learn about Family-Teacher Conference requirements in high-quality early learning programs.
- Discover strategies for purposeful and productive Family-Teacher conferences.
- Explore ideas for family inclusion to establish reciprocal relationships.

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"A growing body of research in the United States has demonstrated that parents' involvement, regardless of their wealth or education, is the most important factor for a child's success in school."  
*(Harvard Family Research Project, 2006)*

### Family Engagement

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### Family-Teacher Conference

#### Shift in Terminology

**Parent-Teacher Conference** → **Family-Teacher Conference**

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### Importance of Family-Teacher Conference

#### Educator / Program Perspective

- Requirements or recommendations to met quality standards
- Establish goals
- Family members as educators
- Family members as educators
- Sharing the school's learning philosophy
- Establishing everyone's role in helping the child learn

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### Importance of Family-Teacher Conference

#### Parent / Family Member Perspective

- Interest in child's development
- Parent concerns / apprehension
- Share information about their family
  - Dynamics
  - Culture
  - Barriers/Success

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### Importance of Family-Teacher Conference

#### NAEYC Early Learning Program Accreditation Standards

#### Standard 7—Families

The Families standard is made up of three topic areas:

- 7.A - Knowing and Understanding the Program's Families
- 7.B - Sharing Information Between Staff and Families
- 7.C - Nurturing Families as Advocates for Their Children

<https://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/early-learning-program-accreditation>

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**Importance of Family-Teacher Conference**      Head Start Standards

1302.34 Parent and family engagement in education and child development services.

(3) Teachers hold parent conferences, as needed, but no less than two times per program year, to enhance the knowledge and understanding of both staff and parents of the child's education and developmental progress and activities in the program

<https://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/early-learning-program-accreditation>

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**Importance of Family-Teacher Conference**

Provisions for Parents 5.3 Good (5) 5.3 Much sharing of child-related information between parents and staff (EX, frequent informal communication; periodic conferences for all children; parent meetings, newsletters, parenting information available).

**What do the Environmental Rating Scales say?**

Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS)

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**Importance of Family-Teacher Conference**

Parents and Staff- Provisions for Parents, Indicator 5.3 that refer to conferences Parents and Staff - Good (5) 5.3 Much sharing of child-related information between parents and staff (EX, frequent informal communication; periodic conferences for all children; parent meetings, newsletters, parenting information available).

**What do the Environmental Rating Scales say?**

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS)

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**Importance of Family-Teacher Conference**

**Parent HANDBOOK 2020**

**Family-Teacher Conference POLICIES**

- Frequency
- Preparing for the conference
- Information to be included during conference
- Scheduling
- Follow the outline/complete forms
- How to handle difficult information

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**Tips for Effective Family-Teacher Conferences**

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**Tips for Effective Family-Teacher Conferences**

**Family Culture**

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## Special Needs Accommodations

Tips for Effective Family-Teacher Conferences

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Tips for Effective Family-Teacher Conference

Schedule a translator  
when necessary.

Language Barriers

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## Before, During and After the Family-Teacher Conference

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BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

### ORGANIZING Tips

What should be included?

- Purpose
- External issues (frustration or resentment)

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### CREATING FORMS/ OUTLINES TO USE

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

- Include families in the process
- Have them compile info to specific questions you plan to review with them during the conference.

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### Family-Teacher Conference Planning Sheet- A SAMPLE

Dear Family,

It is time to meet to discuss \_\_\_\_\_'s progress and create educational goals.

Prepared for the use of conference \_\_\_\_\_.

Please sign and return the bottom portion of this sheet to me by: \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_, I am attend the Family-Teacher Conference at the proposed date/time.

\_\_\_\_\_, I am attend the Family-Teacher Conference at the proposed date/time.

Here are directions which will be available: \_\_\_\_\_.

I would like to discuss the following with you at the Family-Teacher Conference: \_\_\_\_\_.

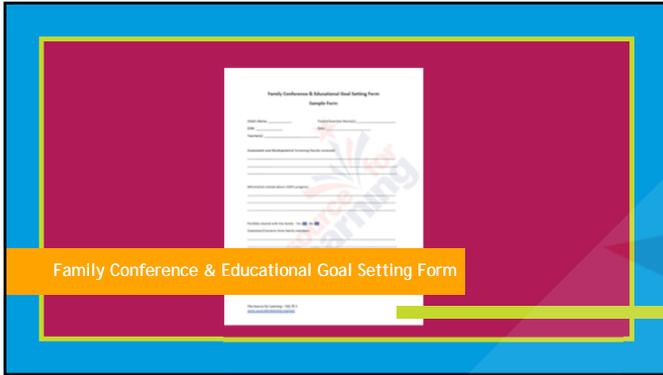
You are requested to consult (parent) with the following items when needed, as applicable. For assistance, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

Parent/Teacher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The School for Learning - 604 813 \_\_\_\_\_

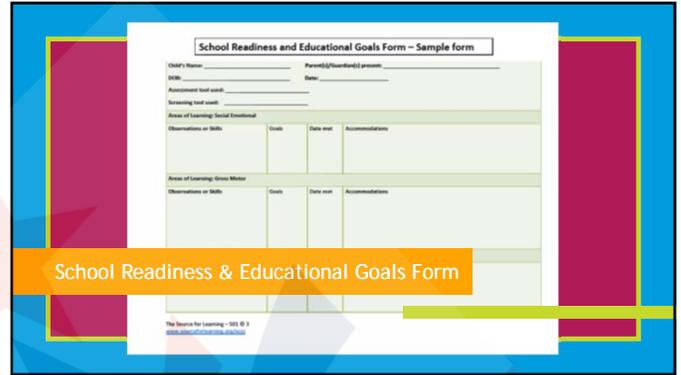
Family-Teacher Conference Planning Sheet

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Family Conference & Educational Goal Setting Form

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School Readiness & Educational Goals Form

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**BEFORE THE CONFERENCE**

**WRITTEN Documentation**      **Commercial Forms**

- Usually have preassigned content areas
- Sometimes auto-filled from observations and assessments
- Has a preset format
- Easy to fill
- Customization difficulty
- May be too long and difficult for a family member
- May not be user-friendly or easily modifiable

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**BEFORE THE CONFERENCE**

**WRITTEN Documentation**      **In-House Forms**

- Created by teachers or management or downloaded from internet source
- Is not auto-filled from observations
- Can be made as easy and simple as needed
- Can be modified as needed
- Easily customizable
- Needs a more thorough quality check

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**BEFORE THE CONFERENCE - Incorporating Technology**

SurveyMonkey		<a href="https://www.surveymonkey.com/">https://www.surveymonkey.com/</a>
JotForm		<a href="https://www.jotform.com/">https://www.jotform.com/</a>
Google Forms		<a href="https://www.google.com/forms/about/">https://www.google.com/forms/about/</a>
123FormBuilder		<a href="https://www.123formbuilder.com/">https://www.123formbuilder.com/</a>
Formsite		<a href="https://www.formsite.com/">https://www.formsite.com/</a>

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**BEFORE THE CONFERENCE**

**PREPARING for the 1<sup>st</sup> Conference**

- Child Assessment/Screening Results
- Information gathering forms/outline
- School Readiness goal form

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**BEFORE THE CONFERENCE**

**PREPARING for the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference**

- Child Assessment/Screening Results
  - Developmental gains
  - Developmental concerns
- Information gathering forms/outline
- School Readiness goal form
- Child Portfolio

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**BEFORE THE CONFERENCE**

**TYPES of Child Portfolios**

- Electronic
- Paper
- Combination of Electronic/Paper

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**BEFORE THE CONFERENCE**

**WHAT Goes Into a Portfolio?**

- Documentation of progress - through photography, work samples, and progress notes
- Learning Assessments
- Developmental screeners

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**BEFORE THE CONFERENCE**

**What DOES NOT Go Into a Portfolio?**

- Processed art
- Cute pictures that are not related to growth

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**BEFORE THE CONFERENCE**

**SCHEDULING Considerations**

- Time of day
- For families
- For programs / staff
- Systems for reminders

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**BEFORE THE CONFERENCE - Incorporating Technology**

Remind		<a href="https://www.remind.com/">https://www.remind.com/</a>
Signup Schedule		<a href="https://signupschedule.com/">https://signupschedule.com/</a>
Bloomz		<a href="https://www.bloomz.net/">https://www.bloomz.net/</a>
Doodle		<a href="https://doodle.com/en/">https://doodle.com/en/</a>
Calendly		<a href="https://calendly.com/">https://calendly.com/</a>

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## During the Family-Teacher Conference

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### STRATEGIES for Effective Communication

#### DURING THE CONFERENCE

- Be prepared
- Stay on topic
- Follow the outline
- Begin and end on time

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### GETTING STARTED with the conference

#### DURING THE CONFERENCE

- Seating arrangement: Sit side-by-side.
- Introductions
- Share positive information first!

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### Family Conference & Educational Goal Setting Form

Family Conference & Educational Goal Setting Form  
Sample Form

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Family Member Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

Address and discuss any learning needs or concerns

Information about school programs

Provide input with the family

The School Personnel

### Family Conference & Educational Goal Setting Form

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### DISCUSS Assessment Results

#### DURING THE CONFERENCE

- Talk about strengths - share anecdotal notes
- Look at skills that the child will soon master

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### PROVIDE Information

#### DURING THE CONFERENCE

- Share about indoor and outdoor play experiences
- Discuss importance of play
- Talk about the daily schedule

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DURING THE CONFERENCE

Develop REALISTIC GOALS  
for Children

- What is the goal?
- What is the timeline to achieve the goal?
- What are the strategies that will be implemented to achieve the goal?

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DURING THE CONFERENCE

REALISTIC GOAL	NON-REALISTIC GOAL
Samantha will share two details after hearing a presentation by June 30, 2020.	<del>Samantha will read four-word sentences by June 30, 2020.</del>

Goal Examples

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DURING THE CONFERENCE

Addressing CONCERNS

Courageous Conversations

- Present facts and not opinions or judgments.
- Being aware of personal judgements.
- Avoid words such as: "always," "everyday," "never," and "all the time."

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DURING THE CONFERENCE

Addressing CONCERNS

Courageous Conversations

- Frame the context of the problem or the challenge
- Provide suggestions
- Avoid "should" statements

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DURING THE CONFERENCE

[Redacted]

- Share supporting documents about concerns
- Use open-ended questions
- Focus on what is best for the child
- Ask about what works at home

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DURING THE CONFERENCE

[Redacted]

- Answer questions
- Ask for clarification or explanation
- Respectfully discuss any differences in opinion

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## DURING THE CONFERENCE

- Discuss any IEP/IFSP

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## DURING THE CONFERENCE

## ASK FOR ITEMS the Program Needs

- Immunization Records
- Child Health Check / Physicals Records
- Copy of IEP / IFSP
- Extra Clothes
- Other

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## DURING THE CONFERENCE

- Document all information shared or discussed by the family.

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## DURING THE CONFERENCE

## CREATE an Action Plan!

- Offer specific suggestions
- Incorporate family member's suggestions to assist the child in the classroom
- Establish a way to track the child's progress
- Consider methods for ongoing communication

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**School Readiness and Educational Goals Form – Sample form**

Child's Name: Samantha Smith  
DOB: April 3, 2016  
Date: April 5, 2020  
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) present: Jerry Smith and Julie Smith  
Assessment tool used: Assessment Tool  
Screening tool used: Screening Tool

**Areas of Learning: Social Emotional – Child will express positive feelings about himself/herself and confidence in what he/she does.**

**Observations or Skills:** Samantha is not confident that she is putting puzzles and manipulatives together properly and is continuously asking for help.

**Goals:** By June 30, 2020, Samantha will put a 6-piece puzzle together without assistance.

**Date met:**

**Strategies:** Samantha will be encouraged to complete puzzles independently during free play in the classroom. Mom and dad add three puzzles to Samantha's playroom and encourage her to complete them independently.

**Areas of Learning: Gross Motor – Child will develop large muscle control and coordination to explore his/her environment.**

**Observations or Skills:** Mom stated that...

**Goals:** Samantha will throw 6 balls that are thrown to her.

**Date met:**

**Strategies:** Mom or dad will throw the ball to Samantha at least once per week during weekend park visits.

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## DURING THE CONFERENCE

## Other CONSIDERATIONS

- Determine the focus or purpose of the document
- Report on skills and abilities mastered
- Consider literacy level/language proficiency of families
- Include goals for learning

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## DURING THE CONFERENCE

## Other CONSIDERATIONS

- Invite family input
- Include : Name, DOB, age, assessment tool used, and summary of skills.
- Use short, complete, objective statements.

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## After the Family-Teacher Conference

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## AFTER THE CONFERENCE

## Follow-Up CONFERENCES

- Portfolio evidence drives the conversation in follow up conferences
- Was the goal achieved - why/why not?
- Create new goals

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## AFTER THE CONFERENCE

## Give RESPONSIBILITY

## Give Family Members Responsibility

- Send home activities for families to complete together to achieve the goal

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- Evidence of growth for the established family goal.
- Evidence of growth in all learning domains.

## Collect Evidence Between Conferences

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## AFTER THE CONFERENCE - Incorporating Technology

## Facebook



Set up a Facebook group for families and stay connected all year long.

## Google Forms



Send out a Google form to family members so that they can submit questions before the conference. That way, you can be ready with responses and resources when they arrive.

## Flipgrid



Use Flipgrid to have family members record video responses to a teacher prompt and share them during the next conference.

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- Need for additional staff/supervisor
- Additional documentation of events/notes

## CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

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### Considerations for Military, Out of State Parent, or Incarcerated Parents

- Video Chat?
- Send portfolio work samples?
- Require multiple meetings?
- Offsite, after-hours meetings?
- Are there others that need to participate in meetings (i.e. social workers)?

## Meeting the Needs of Absentee Parents

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## Resources

1. "The 10 NAEYC Program Standards." NAEYC, <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/10-naeyc-program-standards#7>.
2. "Family Engagement Standards." *Association for Early Learning Leaders*, <https://www.earlylearningleaders.org/accreditation/familyengagement/>.

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## Resources

3. "1302.34 Parent and Family Engagement in Education and Child Development Services." *ECLKC*, 24 Dec. 2018, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-34-parent-family-engagement-education-child-development-services>.
4. Anonymous. "Tips for Successful Parent-Teacher Conferences at Your Child's School." *Colorin Colorado*, 1 Dec. 2015, <https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/tips-successful-parent-teacher-conferences-your-childs-school>.

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## Resources

5. "The Best Ways for Educators to Prepare for Parent-Teacher Conferences." *Concordia University-Portland*, 8 Nov. 2017, <https://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/classroom-resources/how-effective-educators-prepare-for-parent-teacher-conferences/>.

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## NEXT webinar

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHING: From Easing Stress to Increasing Engagement  
Supporting Young Dual Language Learners' Growth in English Language Skills

Wednesday, May 12, 2020 @ 1:00 PM ET

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