

The Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria



Student-Led Conference Handbook

Description of Student-Led Conferences

TYWLS of Astoria understands that the relationship between students, families and the school is of the utmost importance and has developed student-led conferences to bolster that relationship. Student-led conferences (SLCs) are formal meetings that occur twice a year and they replace traditional parent/teacher conferences. During SLCs families are invited to review student performance, growth and goals. SLCs are attended by the student, teachers and parents or guardians, although any other adult in the building or family member may be invited to attend.

During the conference, students describe their performance in their different classes. They discuss their levels of mastery and progress of the outcome targets and they identify areas for improvement. They ground this discussion in selections of work from their classes that allows them to justify their claims.

Students themselves lead the conference, while the teachers circulate to assist and answer questions. By having the students lead the conference, they gain much needed ownership in their learning. They have a voice and an understanding of their progress that a traditional conference often lacks. The conference improves students' sense of self-advocacy and builds their confidence in speaking and presenting. Overall, it should be a positive and honest reflection as well as concrete planning of how to reach goals and ensure success, rather than a negative list of what has not gone well.

Timing of Student-Led Conferences

Each SLC will last approximately 30 minutes. The majority of this time involves students presenting their work, while time is also allocated for questions and feedback from the family and clarification from the teachers.

Objectives of Student-Led Conferences

- Increase student accountability and sense of autonomy
- Foster an open relationship with families about student learning
- Develop TYWLS of Astoria's student-centered philosophy and vision
- Improve students' verbal communication and critical thinking skills

- Support students in justifying their claims with the use of evidence

Conference Preparation

1. Content area teachers ensure students understand how their grades were established and can speak to their levels of mastery of individual outcome targets and the corresponding assessments (students complete Self-Reflection forms/scripts)
2. Advisors work with students to prepare for conference. This includes:
 - a. Establish rationale for SLCs
 - b. Reflect and set overall goals
 - c. Organizing portfolios (may be digital or paper)
 - d. Schedule SLCs
 - e. Distribution of SLC invitations
 - f. Model and practice SLCs

Role of the Student

The student is in charge of the student led conference. Teachers and advisors provide students with support and help them prepare for the conference, but the responsibility of conveying information to parents and families rests on the students.

Students complete self-evaluations for each academic class. They reflect on their progress and the areas in which they need to improve. Students are prepared to share goals and strategies to obtain these goals with the important adults in their lives.

Students identify important pieces of evidence (with rubrics) that illustrate their current levels of mastery. This should include assignments on which they are performing strongly and assignments where they struggled.

Students compile their evidence and self-evaluations for every class in one portfolio. If possible, this portfolio should be digital.

Students show the connection between their work and rubrics with what appears on Jumprope

Students practice explaining their grades and learning target mastery with evidence from various assignments. They take part in mock conferences during advisory and subject

classes.

Students invitations to their parents to invite them to SLCs.

Students make sure that their parents fill out surveys and bring them to their advisors.

Students write formal thank-you notes to their parents after the SLCs.

Role of the Advisor

Much of SLC preparation happens in advisory. Advisors are responsible for coordinating the logistics of the SLC and for helping students successfully complete their requirements.

In preparation for the conferences:

Advisors help students organize assignments and prepare for conferences. They review portfolios, student self-evaluation forms, help students set new goals, and ensure that the reflection done in class is complete

Advisors distribute and discuss the invitation letter for the conferences, explaining the purpose and importance of student-led conferences.

Advisors allocate time during advisory for practice and modeling of student-led conferences.

During practice time, advisors help students improve their speaking skills and problem solving.

Scheduling logistics

Advisors schedule conferences with the parents of advisees during the specific conference times.

Advisors clearly communicate the specific time for each conference with the students and their families.

Advisors create alternate arrangements if parents cannot attend the conference at the allotted time. The names of any parent who is repeatedly unavailable should be given to the office.

Advisors pass on schedules to grade team organizers for whole grade coordination and room assignments.

After the Conferences:

Advisors inform subject teachers of any parental concerns.

Advisors conduct or arrange student-led conferences for those who were not able to attend

Advisors continue to meet with students using these reflections to further goal-setting and coaching in the advisory classroom

Role of the Subject Area Teacher

The subject teacher is responsible for keeping the students informed about their progress toward learning targets, both via JumpRope and by allocating class time to support their understanding. Teacher assessment is clearly aligned with student mastery of learning targets. The teacher helps students learn to explain academic progress in terms of outcome target mastery. Grading is transparent and students know how they are doing in a specific class at all times so the final grade is never a surprise.

Teachers allocate time for students to complete a self-evaluation form. This form includes the major learning targets and an area for goal setting. Students plan ways to meet goals in the upcoming quarters.

Teachers model verbal exposition of the connection between evidence (assignments) and learning target mastery.

Teachers provide class time for students to practice substantiating their grades with evidence from their assignments. Teachers can run mock conferences, specific to their subject area.

During the conference, teachers of all subject-areas should actively circulate the grade-team conference area.

Teachers can answer any questions that the parent has, however, responses to parent requests should be aimed at providing the opportunity for the student to explain her progress on her own.

After the conferences are over, teachers make sure to contact any parent who is requests additional information regarding his/her child's progress in a timely manner.

Role of the Parent/Family

The parent/guardian is an essential attendee to the Student-Led Conference and should be briefed about the format and objectives of the SLC so that the conference runs smoothly.

The parent checks the Jumprope “snapshot” or the Jumprope on-line platform so that he/she is familiar with his/her daughter’s ratings

The parent must be willing to let the student speak, saving questions until the end.

The parent/guardian arrives on time.

The parent/guardian shares any additional requests for meetings with the circulating teachers, so that they can schedule additional meetings if necessary.

The parent/guardian helps the student meet his or her academic and behavioral goals by supporting their progress at home.

The parent/guardian checks in regarding other school events that may be occurring on conference day.

Role of the Grade Team Organizer

The Grade Team Organizer acts as a coordinator of the Student-Led Conferences taking place within a grade team.

The Grade Team Organizer communicates portfolio and self-evaluation formats to the subject area teachers and advisors. This is done in coordination with the other Grade Team Organizers.

The Grade Team Organizer provides grade team advisors with the invitation letter so that they can distribute and discuss during advisories.

The Grade Team Organizer compiles the schedule of all grade level students who are attending and have it present on SLC day

The Grade Team Organizer identifies the rooms that the grade’s SLCs will take place in. This is done in coordination with other Grade Team Organizers

Role of the School

The school is responsible for ensuring that all participants are able to fulfill their roles. It provides teachers with guidance on how to support students; it provides students with adequate time and structure to prepare for the conferences; it provides a forum for parents to express concerns.

The school pre-arranges Student-Led conference days, notifying teachers, students, and parents in a timely manner.

The school shares the student-led conference format with the parents and is clear about the objectives of these meetings.

The school sends multiple reminders home to families.

The school provides students and families with a Jump rope “snapshot” at least a week prior to the conferences to help ensure that progress in each class is communicated.

The school provides translators for teachers who do not speak students’ home language.

The school responds to parental concerns in a timely manner.

The school posts room organization on SLC day for easy navigation by visitors

SLC Preparation Checklist?

Student Preparation Checklist for Student-Led Conferences ?

Student-Led Conference Outline?

Handbook compiled with reference to

Student-Led Conference Handbook. McMahon, Megan. Washington Heights Expeditionary Learning School

Implementing Student-Led Conferences in Your School. Kinney, Patti. National Association of Secondary School Principals

Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies: An Expeditionary Learning School