



Kindergarten Students Use PowerPoint to Lead Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences have long served as a time for teachers and parents to discuss individual student progress. Traditionally, students have only had a small role in conferences; but many schools now encourage student-led conferences. When Ralston Public School teachers underwent staff development on conducting student-led conferences, most staff felt that younger students would not be able to successfully lead a conference. So, we set out to prove it could be done. With the help of PowerPoint presentations, we proved that even young students could lead their own conferences.

We had to first determine the tools that younger students would need to be able to inform their parents about their progress. The teacher and media-technology specialist devised a system by which students can record and remember information regardless of their reading ability. PowerPoint presentations were used because they offer a visual cueing system in addition to the printed words, so that a younger child would be able to communicate in a sequential, organized, and efficient manner. Clip art and digital pictures can also be used as prompts in addition to the printed words. We used the following format as the basis for the student-led conferences:

Slide one—Title page with name and date.

Slide two—Student's response to the

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question: What are you good at?

Slide three—Student's response to the question: What do you like to do at school?

Slide four—Student's response to the question: What do you need to practice?

Slide five—Student's response to the question: What sight words do you know?

Slide six—Student's response to the question: What is your favorite job in kindergarten?

Slide seven—Photo of student with classmates.

Every phase of producing the PowerPoint presentations should be integrated into the classroom's daily routine. For example, digital pictures can be taken during the normal school day; student interviews can be completed during center time; reading and math knowledge can be documented as a part of daily assignments; and PowerPoint presentations can be practiced during literacy time. After all the information about each student is compiled, it can be entered into a presentation format that is similar for all students.


The first year we implemented the program, it took 10 minutes for the teacher or media specialist to enter the data into the PowerPoint slides for each child. That time was cut in half during the second year of the program by using a paraprofessional and high school intern to enter the data. We also saved time because all of the clip art had already been saved from the previous year's presentations.

Assessing the Benefits

Because each student does the talking during student-led conferences, the emphasis is truly on the child. Each conference should take about 10 minutes, and should end with an opportunity for parents to contribute feedback by completing a survey. At the conclusion of the PowerPoint presentation, the parents and the teacher also have an opportunity for further discussion.

In addition to serving as a visual and electronic record of progress, PowerPoint presentations can be an excellent vehicle for students to integrate district and state speaking standards in a meaningful way. Rehearsing the PowerPoint presentation is crucial because the student leads the conference. Our kindergarten students visited the school media center with a paraprofessional to practice introductions between the parent and the teacher, voice volume, and intelligibility of speech utterances, as well as how to navigate through their PowerPoint presentations.

Some of the obvious technology standards that can be met with student PowerPoint presentations are the ability to access a computer and use input devices, such as a mouse. This is especially important for students who do not have access to a computer at home. By implementing this program, every student can complete a PowerPoint presentation and save it to a CD or make a printed copy. Every student can learn responsible behavior for computer use and learn ethical behaviors about ownership of electronic documents, photography, and clip art. As students begin to develop and discuss their PowerPoint presentations, they will learn to communicate using accurate computer terminology and they will discover that the printed word, photography, and clip art can all represent and illustrate their thoughts and ideas. By practicing their PowerPoint presentation with peers, teachers, and paraprofessionals, students will learn that although their work was created individually, PowerPoint presentations offer the ability to share work with other people on a large scale and across the nation. Most important, young children will learn that computers are not just big electronic game boxes, but rather a way to communicate with others.

PowerPoint presentations can open the doors of the school building in a nonthreatening, timely, and visual manner for parents and families to experience other technology-based educational tools like online grading and school e-mail messages. Computer knowledge and access are important ingredients for providing equity among students as they continue to learn and progress in school. It also makes communicating with others fun and interesting. 

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