Tips for One-to-One Problem-Solving Conferences

A one-to-one problem-solving conference is a meeting between you and your student to discuss a specific behavior problem. The goal of this conference is not to punish, but to listen to the student and give caring and firm guidance. This conference should be looked upon as a cooperative effort on the student’s behalf.

**How do you know when a one-on-one conference is needed?**
Ask yourself, “If this were my child, would I want the teacher to sit down and work with him/her to improve the behavior? Would I want the teacher to take the time and interest to show my child better options?” If the answer is yes, then it is time to meet with the student.

**Keep these guidelines in mind when conducting a one-to-one problem-solving conference:**

- **Show empathy and concern.**
  First and foremost, let the student know that you are concerned and that you care about him or her. Let the student know that you are meeting not to punish but to help and offer guidance.

- **Question the student to find out why there is a problem.**
  Don’t assume you know why the student is misbehaving. Ask questions.
  - “Did something happen today to get you so upset?”
  - “Are other students bothering you?”
  - “Do you have trouble seeing the board?”
  - “Is the work too difficult for you?”
  - “Is there something happening at home or in your neighborhood that’s causing problems?”

- **Determine what you can do to help.**
  Is there anything you can do to help solve the problem? There may in fact be a simple answer that you don’t want to overlook.
  For example:
  - If a student is having trouble in class with another student, move his seat.
  - If a disruptive student is seated at the back of the class, consider moving her forward.
  - Contact the parents if you feel the student needs additional help and support from home.
  - Increase your positive attention toward the student, not just your consequences. Look for the first praiseworthy behavior after the conference, then send a positive note or behavior award home.
• A student may need academic help that you, a tutor or a peer study buddy may be able to provide. Make that help available.

• **Determine how the student can improve his behavior.**
  Ask the student for his or her input concerning ways to improve the problem behavior. Share ideas. Keep in mind that some students may not be willing or unable to share their feelings about choosing different behavior. If this is the case, help them by pointing out more appropriate behavior.

• **Agree on a course of action.**
  Combine your input with the student’s input and agree upon a plan of action both of you can follow to improve the situation.

• **Clearly state to the student that you expect him to change his behavior.**
  At some point during the conference you must let the student know that you expect behavior to improve.
  • “I’m going to work with you to solve this problem, Leslie. You’re a smart student and I know you can behave responsibly. But you have to remember that fighting is not allowed at our school. Anytime you fight, you will be choosing to go to the principal.”

• **Summarize the conference. Show your confidence!**
  Wrap up the conference by summarizing what was said. Most important, end with a note of confidence.
  • “I think we made a good start today. I know you can do better. Starting tomorrow, it will be different. I’m glad we had this talk.”

**Grades K-2**
Young students are very concrete. Your discussion must be very specific about how the child should behave. You may actually want to role-play the behaviors you want the student to engage in to ensure that he or she understands what you mean.

**Grades 3-5**
At this age students do not want to be told what to do. They want to feel they have a say in how they choose to behave. Whenever possible, involve the student in discussing how he or she should change behavior.