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CHLD 392

May 8, 2015

Parent Conference Assignment

* I attended the Parent Conference on Friday, May 8, 2015 in the Maple Room. The conference was scheduled to begin at 10:30am and end at 11:00am. It did not begin until 10:45am, however, it still ended promptly at 11:00am.
* Teacher Lisa led the conference. Natalia’s mom attended the conference and Natalia was also present for the conference.
* The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Natalia’s developmental stages and the goals Teacher Lisa had for Natalia throughout the semester. The conference began with Teacher Lisa giving Natalia’s mom a paper that outlined Natalia’s strengths, areas for improvement, and her goals in the classroom. As Natalia’s mom read through the paper given to her, she asked Teacher Lisa if she had noticed Natalia having sudden outbursts or “tantrums” while at school. She continued by elaborating on instances she has observed at home when Natalia would “randomly throw tantrums” for no apparent reason. Teacher Lisa and Natalia’s mom spoke for several minutes about this matter. Teacher Lisa offered some suggestions as to why this was occurring, such as maybe Natalia is “testing the boundaries” with her mom. Natalia’s mom expressed concern about this matter because she noted that Natalia had already gone through her two-year-old phase where she would have tantrums, so she was surprised that again at age 3 ½ she was having tantrums.
* First, Teacher Lisa asked how Natalia’s mom was doing. Teacher Lisa listened attentively and responded appropriately, which I feel set a comfortable and safe environment for the conference. In addition to an adult sized chair for Natalia’s mom, there were pastries and napkins for the parents to enjoy.
* The conversation was shared pretty equally among Natalia’s mom and Teacher Lisa. Natalia’s mom spoke just a little more than Teacher Lisa, but for the most part, it was an equally reciprocated conference.
* I learned some personal family information from this conference. It was interesting to get an insight into this aspect of Natalia’s family life because I never would have imagined that her parents are experiencing what they are based upon my personal interactions with Natalia, and also based upon her parents’ interactions when they drop her off in the mornings when I am in the Maple Room. It was really nice to see how supportive Teacher Lisa was of Natalia’s mom, and also how she praised Natalia’s dad for his efforts as a father, even though he was not present for the conference. Natalia’s mom appeared very content and confident in her daughter’s abilities as a child, as she should very well be. As a result of this, there was not too much discussion about improvements of worries regarding Natalia. Her mom did ask about her language skills, and Teacher Lisa was very complementary of Natalia and saw no reason to worry about her language, as she is definitely where she should be, or even “more advanced.”
* I learned that a lot of time and effort on the teacher’s end going into preparing for a parent conference. I could tell that Teacher Lisa put in a lot of time preparing the paper for Natalia’s mom. However, it did not seem like too much time was spent talking about what was documented on the paper. I learned how important it is to have effective communication skills when communicating with parents. Especially when talking about a parent’s child, it is important to choose words wisely, yet still portray the intentional message that is necessary for the parents to hear. Lastly, I realized that some very personal conversations may arise, therefore is it really important that the teacher is able to actively listen and be able to respond appropriately and in a sensitive manner.
* If I had been the teacher, I feel that I would have liked to talk to the parent more than what I observed. Natalia is a very independent child who is developing very appropriately and in a healthy way so there is not too much to discuss about concerns, issues within the classroom, etc. That being said, I felt that there was not too much in-depth conversation about Natalia and her classroom interactions, experiences, and development as I had expected. The conference felt very casual, which is wonderful, but it was much more of telling stories than I had anticipated. That could have been hugely as a result of Natalia being present for the conference. Since Natalia was in the room, there were more distractions, having to help her with potty, etc. I wonder if because Natalia was there this was not necessarily a “typical” parent conference.
* If I was the parent, if possible, I would not bring my child to the conference. I understand there are issues with child care, but if possible, I feel that not having my child at a parent conference would be much more beneficial, for both parties.
* On a scale of 1-3, I would rate my confidence in conducting a parent conference at this point in my career as a 2 ½ . At my previous job, working as a preschool teacher, I would give reports to the parents each day about their child’s day. Additionally, I feel that having completed the DRDP I am able to determine the strengths and areas for improvement in a child. Strengths that I bring are having the ability to communicate with parents in a professional yet casual/ comfortable/ safe way. I ensure that I do not only talk about areas of improvement for children, because parents of course need to hear that, but they also want to hear about how wonderful their child is at school. A challenge that I face is that it is never easy to inform a parent when their child behaves inappropriately, is not at the “typical” developmental stage, or whatever the case may be.
* One thing mentioned in the article that I did not describe in an earlier prompt was that Teacher Lisa offered a flexible conference schedule for the parents. Both her and Teacher Kori offered alternative times that they could meet with the parents who had varying work, school, and other schedules. This was done very well on behalf of the teachers in the Maple Room, as I observed that special accommodations were made for some parents who were not able to make the designated day/ time of the parent conferences.
* I learned that parent-teacher relationships are essential for the success and healthy development of the child. It is important for the teacher and parent to feel safe to talk about personal, and sometimes serious, issues. It is important that honesty and trust are the foundation of the relationship because ultimately, the child is what brings the parent and teacher together and whenever a child is involved, it is imperative that a positive and healthy relationship exists.