

Georgia Department of Education  
Teacher Keys Effectiveness System

# CONFERENCING

## TKES QUICK GUIDE

### HOW DOES SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCING INFLUENCE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?

Effective conferencing is a respectful, two-way, open-ended flow of communication that balances listening and speaking for the purpose of learning. The purpose of a conference is to inquire, learn, and plan. Research notes that teachers and evaluators need to communicate early and often throughout the evaluation process in order to focus on what is being learned and maximize growth for individuals and the school (Stronge, 2006). When conducted around a common understanding of good teaching, evaluator-teacher conversations offer a rich opportunity for professional dialogue and growth. Thus, successful conferencing: (1) stays focused on teaching practice and student achievement; (2) shares common understanding of TKES rubrics, standards and teaching excellence; and (3) considers evidence in light of these performance rubrics.

*...To become a reality, the principal must be clear about his or her commitment to teacher quality and evaluation in tangible ways.*

Stronge, J.H. (2006). *Qualities of Effective Principals*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

While conferencing throughout the year is extremely important, the final conference is the most significant of the evaluation process. For these conferences to be effective, principals must plan and prepare for them by: (1) setting date, time, and place with the teacher; (2) asking the teacher to come prepared to discuss major strengths, successes, and unmet expectations or goals; (3) reviewing all data, documentation, and evidence related to the teacher's performance (including observations, student achievement data, and student survey data); (4) completing the evaluation with summarizing notes to identify successes and concerns; (5) planning for tactful ways to address concerns; and (6) preparing questions to enable the teacher to meaningfully analyze their strengths and areas for improvement.

Reflection after the conference is critical. Principals need to consider the following post-conference questions: (1) Did you put the teacher at ease? (2) Did you allow and encourage the teacher to do most of the talking? (3) Did you promote honest self-assessment by the teacher? (4) Were you clear about strengths and areas of improvement? (5) Did the teacher "hear" you?

Additional resources for providing Low Inference Feedback are available to assist in successful conferencing.

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### CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE EVALUATION CONFERENCES:

- Two-way communication: Principals who are good listeners can obtain useful information about teacher's performance and needs.
- Balance of past performance and future performance: A conference is more than summarizing the past or present performance. It also includes setting performance goals and developing plans to reach the goals.
- Recognition of teacher strengths and successes: Emphasizing what the teacher has done well can enhance his or her motivation, morale, and improve performance.
- Identification and analysis of problems affecting the teacher's performance: When performance expectations are not met, it is important for the teacher to identify and analyze the reasons. Principals should pursue joint-problem solving with the teacher and be willing to give needed support.
- Teacher initiation of goals for the next evaluation cycle: Teacher initiated goal-setting builds ownership and commitment to accomplish the goals.

### OTHER REMINDERS:

- Application of Adult Learning
  - Involve the adult in his/her own learning
  - Give concrete and specific feedback
  - Provide clear statements
  - Elicit the adult's opinions
  - Use time efficiently
  - Suggest further steps to expand skills
- Drawing Out Teacher Responses
  - Practice silence, longer wait time
  - Ask open-ended questions
  - Remember to talk less
  - Probe for realistic reasons for problems
  - Ask for specific clarification of issues
  - Concentrate on performance-related issues
- Plan for the Conference
  - Specific opening questions
  - Facilitating questions
  - Reflective questions
  - Growth questions
  - Closing statements