

## What is a Learning Conversation?

A Learning Conversation is a meeting run by the student for his or her parents, entirely focused on the student's recent learning. During the Learning Conversation the student presents work in different curriculum areas, discussing the process of learning and the progress made to date.

## Why have student led Learning Conversations?

Because it confirms all the research we have read — developing students' ability to reflect, talk about their learning and their progress makes a difference! We believe that student involvement in the conferences makes learning more active, provides better opportunities for students to evaluate their performance, and encourages students to accept greater responsibility for their learning. Having students take charge of the conference makes them more accountable for what they are learning. This principle is consistent with effective pedagogy and assessment within in the New Zealand Curriculum. In addition, this form of conferencing creates a stronger partnership between the home and the school that is difficult to get in any other way.

**The purpose of student led learning conversations is for students to display learner agency (ownership of their learning) and to help them take personal responsibility for their progress. It is a chance for them to share their learning journey with whanau (family) and friends.**

In the traditional parent-teacher conference, students are “third parties” to assessment, hearing about their progress through the grapevine of teachers and parents. Teachers and parents do play a vital role in assessment but students must also take an active role in this area to maximize their potential for success.

## The research about student led conferences/conversations:

Professor John Hattie (formerly University of Auckland) published a list of the most effective influences on student achievement which identifies student self-reporting as the most significant indicator linked to raised student achievement. Two other international researchers, Black & Wiliam, further comment, "the process of students reflecting on their learning, through effective questioning that promotes the articulation of student thinking, is integral to classroom assessment practices that enhance student learning".

'If the focus is to be kept on learning, and the ownership of the learning with the child, then the best person to talk about the learning is the learner'... 'Not only is the student the best person to tell their parents what they have learnt, but if we believe that students build their knowledge by communicating what they know, then providing an opportunity for the students to tell their family what they know can significantly assist with that learning.' Absolum, (2006)

Research also shows parental involvement in schools and classrooms has a positive impact on children's learning (Bastiani; Epstein). In helping to strengthen the partnership between the learner, the teacher and the parent, we believe student led conferences promote some ways learning can also be supported at home.

- Absolum, M. (2006) *Clarity in the Classroom*, Auckland, Hodder.
- Bastiani, J. (1988) 'How Many Parents Did You See Last Night?' A critical look at some of the problems of evaluating home/school practice.' In J. Bastiani (ed.) *Parents and teachers 2: From policy to practice*. Windsor: nfer Nelson 206–218.
- Black, P. & Wiliam, D. (1998) *Inside the Black Box: Raising standards through classroom assessment*. Phi Delta Kappan, October, 139–148.
- Epstein, J. L. (1986) *Parents' reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement*. *Elementary School Journal*, 86, 277–294.
- Hattie, J. (2009) *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. New York: Routledge.

## How do Learning Conversations work?

Learning Conversations are for 30 minutes. Multiple student lead conversations will be held at the same time in your child's studio. You will be involved in a variety of activities during the time — looking at samples of learning, doing an activity to support learning, talking about goals and what your child, you and the teacher might do to support these goals, looking at work around the classroom. During the Learning Conversation, your child's teacher/s will spend some time with you. This time will allow the teacher to expand on the information your child has shared or for you to clarify something if necessary.