

### **Artifact:**

#### Domain Four, Communicating with Families

This piece is a reflection on my first experience with parent/teacher conferences. Overall, it was an enlightening experience. This artifact demonstrates my connection with parents and my desire to partner with them for the success of their children. On top of moments like this in my student teaching, I also utilized "remind.com". This resource allowed me to send quick weekly updates on what is happening in class and what homework would be given out. Most parents didn't need more than this, but this level of communication was comfort for them so they knew what was happening in class and what they could ask their children about. It was a great way to further that partnership, which leads to success for their children.

#### Parent/Teacher Conferences Reflection

Fall 2015

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On Tuesday and Wednesday of this week, parent/teacher conferences were held at Timberline High School. They were from 4-7pm both evenings, which I thought was a good time for conferences in order to get more parents to participate. Overall, they went well. For day one, I was at Mr. Simpson's table and the second night was at Copeland's. The first night was smooth, largely because Simpson had a laptop with a breakdown of the grades for each of our students. So when my students' parents arrived, I talked more generally about how their child is doing and where there could be some improvement. Following that, Simpson and I would walk through the specific assignments and clarify any areas of confusion.

On the second night, I had a sheet printed of a similar breakdown of grades, but it was not as organized, or as visually aesthetic. The first half, Copeland was coaching, so I oversaw the conferences. The second half, I got to observe Copeland's style of conferences.

Simpson, not surprisingly, felt more professional. He was continually positive with parents, pointing out the strengths of the students, even the ones on the edge of failing. Then he would throw in areas of improvement and ways to bring up the student's grade. His tone of voice was around creating a type of partnership with the parent, instead of telling the parent where to improve. I enjoyed this approach, largely because this is my style, which I developed at the Boys and Girls Club.

Copeland, on the other end, had a style I have not seen. When the parent came, he said the grade of his student and asked if they had questions or concerns. Very direct. Then he veered the conversation two different directions. Either, he would ask the parents how they are doing and how conferences have been going. Or if the parents knew he was the coach, he would talk about football. I don't know if this was a strategy or

not, but it worked. Well, worked in the sense that parents were not upset when done with the conference.

As you can obviously tell, Simpson felt more effective than Copeland. More professional, rather. It's fascinating how much power the teacher has during these conferences. For most of them, parents are just searching for affirmation as to how they are parenting. And our views of their child seem to have so much influence on them. Many times, what we said about their child's behavior, felt like a huge moment of anticipation being released. Whether good or bad, that's something I did not expect. The rest that occurred, good and bad, was pretty usual. But overall the experience was quite enjoyable. Teachers dread it, but I found the connections made with parents to be enlightening and helpful. It's like I developed more allies in furthering the education of my students. It's a great experience.