



## PLANNING YEAR-END CONFERENCES

**W**hether your program concludes at the end of May or continues through the summer, late spring is a good time to talk with parents about the progress their child has made. With careful planning, these conferences can give you and your staff a chance to share your pride in each child's development and, at the same time, strengthen your parent-partnership roles. Share these planning tips with staff to get started.

*Before you meet with parents and/or family members, consider:*

■ **Who will be attending?** Naturally, the teacher who knows the child best, but if there is a specific concern or a sensitive issue that needs to be discussed, you might attend in a supportive capacity.

■ **What do you hope this conference will accomplish?** What do this child's parents *want* and *need* at this time? Remember: The most successful conferences consider everyone's perspectives.

■ **Be flexible in scheduling.** Talk with staff about how they can meet with parents at parents' convenience — when and where they won't be disturbed. Offering care through your program to parents who need it to attend conferences signals how important you think this meeting is. As a director, you might offer to take a teacher's place in class while he or she does conferencing.

■ **Prepare.** Offer your time beforehand to help teachers go over any notes in their files, developmental records, reports of earlier conferences, parent concerns, etc. Encourage teachers to jot down items of interest such as activities the child particularly enjoys, special friends he or she has

made, and any personal observations that help to summarize the child's experiences during the year. Select anecdotes that illuminate the child's positive qualities or that show how a problem was solved. If appropriate, be prepared to point to parent/teacher strategies that were successful and share a well-earned pat on the back!

■ **Review your "developmental defense plan."** As you know, year's end can be a time when some parents unconsciously expect a "report card," or may compare their child's "progress" to that of other children the same age. It's a good idea to review with staff ahead of time each child's overall developmental progress, so the teacher will be prepared to discuss specific ways their child has grown over the year. Take this opportunity to reiterate that development is an individual process that proceeds at a different but precisely "right" rate for each child.

■ **Offer a "preview of coming attractions."** When conferencing with parents whose children are returning to your program next year, teachers may want to discuss the ways parents can expect their child to develop further. They or you might take time to talk about appropriate summer family activities.

■ **Invite feedback.** Year-end conferences are also a good time to ask parents for feedback on your program. Your staff can work together to create a list of questions that might include feelings and concerns about safety and equipment, policies, curriculum, parent involvement, and parent education. Welcoming parents' views in conjunction with this discussion of their children's growth underlines your shared responsibility and how much you care. □