

Winter 2004 Learning Led Conference Primer

If this is one of your first learner led conferences (LLC's), then you are likely still getting used to the vision and purpose behind these conferences. If this is your fifteenth conference, maybe you have already become disillusioned with this process or perhaps you look forward to these reflective moments in your child's life.

Regardless of your experience with the conferences, I hope we can all take the time to remind ourselves why we are here. And that is to acknowledge that our learners are more than the grades they receive on their report card. They are more than their score on their last exam. And though, as a school, we pride ourselves on the academic success that our learners achieve here and beyond, we also want to acknowledge the various skills and habits that we promote here at ACLC.

Over the years, Learner Led Conferences have asked learners to reflect on various "Learning to Learn" skills. Over the years these conferences have been one of the structures that remind us to revisit and access the skills that are not directly addressed by academic marks.

The vision and purpose of this session's learner led conference is no different, but learners have developed a unique and creative method to access various "Learning to Learn" skills. The leadership class agreed that creating a community product where all learners contributed and collaborated would reach this end. Every learner would be required to practice effective communication, participate in our democratic community, and exhibit behaviors indicative of life long learning.

As a school we set out to create a learner created website. Everyone was asked to pick one of the three Work Teams (Design, Written Content, and Visual Content). Once they picked a team they were assigned a task and a manager that would oversee their progress. (Some learners failed to chose a group or a task. These learners were encouraged to create personal pages that addressed their interests). These team meetings took place during our school wide meetings on Wednesday mornings and during two other work periods where most learners do not have scheduled seminars or classes. During these meetings, managers and learners worked together to organize tasks and to strategically plan to finish the task at hand.

Each learner was encouraged to do more than the simple task they may have been assigned by their manager. We wanted to be sure that learners had an opportunity to express themselves and create something that they were proud of. In the end some learners far exceeded their expectations, putting in many hours of work. Meanwhile, other learner may have dodged responsibility for the past three weeks. The many managerial and technical difficulties that arouse provided challenges and opportunities for our learners to address and solve common problems that they will face in their life's outside of school. Fortunately, in the end many learners took responsibility for the community goal and took a proactive approach, which allowed us to succeed in making a functional and creative webpage.

We hope this conference will help us reflect upon how our learners interact with each other, how they handle responsibility, and ultimately if they helped our small community in working towards a common goal.