



Five Tips to Prepare for Smooth Caregiver Conferences

It's that time of year again—parent-teacher conference season! We're here to help you kick off the school year with tools to ensure caregivers are informed about student progress. Whether your students are in self-contained classrooms or general education settings, we've got five tips to make caregiver communication smooth and effective.

#1 Keep it informal.



Caregivers can be just as nervous as educators during these conferences. Think of these meetings as casual check-ins to get on the same page with your students' caregivers. While you may end up reporting about some progress on IEP goals, this is the ideal time to establish an easy rapport with caregivers, which can help make formal IEP meetings smoother down the road. This is a great time to reinforce your advocacy, celebrating students' strengths and what they bring to the classroom.

#2 Use data to create a snapshot of student skill development.



Review each student's STAR learning profile or Links lesson assessment to give families insight about where students are now, and what's to come. These resources show which lessons the student is currently working on, the skills they have mastered so far, and what they'll be working on next. It's also helpful to learn about caregivers' priorities when it comes to their students' skill-building. Use this [resource](#) to gather additional information that will help you set consistent goals for student skill development.

#3 Emphasize the importance of generalization.



Once caregivers have an understanding of the skills their students are mastering in the classroom, help them carry over that skill development at home. One way to do this is with the use of common language across settings. Encourage caregivers to use the phrases students hear throughout the day (e.g., "do this," "come here," "sit down," "stop," "wait," "walk with me," "my turn") to help them generalize. Explain that students who have consistency across home and school settings have more success. With STAR's free [Home Supports](#), you can send caregivers home with the same visual supports their students use at school. Offer a visual schedule template and **icons** to help them get started.

#4 Teamwork makes the dream work.



Some conferences will include a student's entire support team, particularly those in general education settings supported by resource rooms. When multiple educators are in the room, this is a great opportunity to cover more ground. A general education teacher might discuss academics in depth, while a resource room teacher provides updates on social emotional skills. For students working with SOLER tools, this is a valuable opportunity to give caregivers information about behavioral progress and strategies to support these skills at home. Use our SOLER caregiver overview to introduce this fun new social emotional curriculum to families. And did you know that SOLER lessons have companion Home Support digital REELS? Provide these REEL links to caregivers so they can help their students work on the same skills they're developing in their SOLER groups.

#5 Keep it going.



Regular caregiver communication is important! Families want to know what their students are doing at school, and staying in touch helps caregivers feel comfortable coming to you when issues arise. If you use a communication notebook to inform caregivers about their students' days, remember to focus on the positive, provide generalization ideas, and offer tools to help support students at home. Ask caregivers how they'd like to stay in touch (e.g., text, email, notes, etc.), and keep them up to date on the content their students are enjoying throughout the year. Themes First! users can find a monthly caregiver newsletter they can send home at the beginning of each month to get the whole family in on the fun.