

**IDEA!**

**WORKING OUT THE WRINKLES**

Before starting three-way conferences, the staff in one school brainstormed all the possible wrinkles that might occur. Then they worked together to generate possible solutions.

WRINKLES	SMOOTHERS
<p>Parents don't want their child present when they meet with the teacher.</p>	<p>Provide a sign-up sheet for a two-way (parent/teacher) conference.</p>
<p>Parent is highly critical of child, and conference focus is being lost.</p>	<p>Stop the direction of conversation by saying, "I need to interrupt you and remind you that the purpose of this conference is to focus on your child's strengths, look at concerns in a constructive manner, and set goals. This was all outlined in my letter to you. It appears that you have some issues outside this focus that you wish to discuss, and I'd be pleased to set another time to meet with you privately. In the meantime, I'd like to continue. Would that be possible?" (If parent is unable to cooperate, stop the conference.)</p>
<p>Parents don't speak English.</p>	<p>If the child isn't able to translate for his or her parent or doesn't feel comfortable translating, contact community groups, parents' associations, or school-board office to arrange for someone who can act as a translator.</p>
<p>Specialist teachers feel left out (e.g. Music, French, Physical Education).</p>	<p>Possibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a special conference day</li> <li>• a separate sign-up sheet</li> <li>• a "drop-in center" on conference day</li> </ul>

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*Figure 4*  
Wrinkles and Smootherers

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WRINKLES	SMOOTHERS
Learning assistance teacher wants to be involved.	Arrange four-way conferences.
Parents attack teacher's methods or style.	Brainstorm phrases to use if this situation occurs. (e.g., "I can see that you are really concerned about this. Right now, since Jeremy is here, why don't we continue Jeremy's conference and schedule a private interview to discuss your concerns.")
Parents bring siblings.	Provide a child-minding area, using para-professionals, volunteer parents, or older students to help.
Child gets silly or misbehaves (out of character).	If parent doesn't intervene, try a comment such as, "_____, this isn't like you. You must be feeling nervous. This is your time to tell your parents about your learning. We've prepared for this. Give it a try by starting with _____."
The student is enthusiastic about having a three-way conference but the parents are unavailable.	<p>Possibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get parents' permission to have older brother, sister, aunt, last year's teacher, older buddy, or school counsellor attend. (A report written by the teacher will be sent home.)</li> </ul>

Figure 4  
Wrinkles and Smoothers (cont'd.)



**IDEA!**

*PROVIDING A SAFE AUDIENCE*

One teacher had older student buddies help their young buddies rehearse the review of their collections of work. The teacher provided the big buddies with response sheets, which they filled in at the end of the practice conferences.

Dear Buddy

I really liked

★ \_\_\_\_\_

★ \_\_\_\_\_

Be sure to show your

parents \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

(older buddy)



Figure 5 Response Sheet—  
Younger Buddy/Older Buddy