**Essential Learning Conversations in Primary School**

**Information for parents, carers and families**

*‘As partners in the education of their children, parents work collaboratively with teachers and staff’*

*Charter for Parents in Catholic School SA*

Parent-teacher interviews are an important opportunity to get to know your child's teacher(s) and build a relationship with them. They help teachers and families to share useful information about a child’s progress, interests and needs, and to find ways to work together. Asking questions to learn more about the information in the report helps you to effectively engage in your child's learning and support the work of their teacher.

**Things to Think About**

**Your child’s progress, strengths and challenges**

* Academic, social and emotional

**Your child’s attitude to school and in class**

* Punctuality
* Relationship with the teacher
* Attention and task completion
* Independence
* Initiative

**Your child’s commitment to school expectations**

* In class
* In the playground
* In school routines

**Your child’s peer relationships**

* Friendships
* Working in groups
* Working in a composite class

**How you try to help your child at home**

* Homework routine
* Time management/organisation
* Hints or strategies to support their learning

**The curriculum and school and class activities**

* Curriculum for the term/year; topics to be covered
* School and class activities, traditions, celebrations
* How parents can help in the school or classroom

**Before the Interview**

* Clarify if your child is expected to attend and what is expected of them in the interview.
* Know what time the interview will be held and where.
* Read the report a few times and think about the information in it.
* What positive things does it say? Are there any areas of learning (e.g. reading, maths, social skills) that you especially want to discuss?
* Plan, and write down, a couple of specific questions you want to ask or comments you want to make.
* Reflect on what you know about your child as a learner. Teachers value these insights.
* Talk with your child about the report and interview. Ask what things they would like you to discuss and find out. Give them time to think about this.
* Also ask your child what they like about their school, teacher and school friends so you can give some positive information to the teacher.
* Note down anything about your child or family that you might want to tell the teacher in confidence:
  + Does your child have worries, concerns or fears?
  + Have things changed at home (e.g. work, family responsibilities, health circumstances, issues with older children, family death?).

If teachers know about these things, they can offer more or different support to your child/children.

* Often, these interviews aren’t very long. Planning will help you to decide what you most want to know, and what you most want to share.

© 2020

**Listening and Speaking**

Respect the teacher’s professional expertise but don’t be overwhelmed by this:

* ask for more explanation if you don’t clearly understand what the teacher has said or means, or uses jargon (‘flash’ education words) and acronyms (e.g. APRIM, CESA, PD)
* be respectfully assertive when you need to be; express your needs and concerns, offer a different opinion, advocate for your child or family but don’t be rude and don’t get personal because that won’t help to solve your issues or differences.
* keep the mindset that both you and the teacher want the best for your child, even if you sometimes feel the teacher doesn’t care, and that respectful parent-teacher relationships really benefit children’s learning and sense of security.

After you have listened to the teacher’s comments, take a moment to look at the questions/comments you wrote down before you came to the interview. What do you most want to ask now you have listened to the teacher? And what, if anything, do you also want to tell them? Make clear anything that is confidential.

Remember, too, that it’s okay to write some notes in the interview to help you remember the key points.

**After the Interview**

**Discuss it with your child. Talk about:**

* The good things (their ‘strengths’) and celebrate (praise and encourage) these.
* The ideas you discussed to help their learning.
* Learning goals they might aim for.

**Follow up as soon as possible. Did the teacher:**

* Recommend any strategies or resources?
* Offer ideas to support your child’s routines at home?
* Propose accessing additional support?

**A Final Note**

Formal parent/teacher interviews are an important form of communication between you and your child’s teacher - but they are only one form. In between these essential conversations, keep connected through other forms of school-home communication like email, your child’s diary, communication book, text message and phone.

**Four Useful Questions You Might Ask**

1. What can you tell me about my child as a learner?
2. Is there anything about my child’s learning or social -emotional needs that I should know?
3. What can I share with you about my child’s learning style, strengths and challenges that might help you?
4. What can I do to help my child progress this year?

Other types of questions you might ask in the interview or some other time:

* What opportunities are there for me to learn about what you are covering in class and see examples of my child’s work?
* How does my child participate in classroom activities and group work?
* What activities does my child seem to enjoy the most?
* How would you describe my child’s social skills - in class and in the playground?
* How would you describe my child’s ability to cooperate? Work independently? Follow directions? Follow routines?
* How is my child progressing in comparison to others?
* What’s the best thing I can do to help my child’s learning?
* What is the best time and way to contact you if I have a question or concern?
* What are some ways I might help in the classroom or in the school community? I don’t really have much time …

**At the Interview**

* Arrive early; make sure the teacher knows you’re there.
* Be positive in your attitude and relax as much as you can.
* If you’re feeling nervous, tell the teacher. Just doing this will make you feel a bit better. And, remember, some teachers are nervous too.
* Remember it is meant to be a two-way discussion where you hear information and you contribute questions, comments and family knowledge.
* Be aware of your body language and what it might be saying to the teacher. If you realise you might be sending negative messages, change it.

© 2020