Learning Conversations in Primary School

An Essential Conversation

“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 opportunity for you to meet and get to know your child's teacher and build a strong relationship between your home and your child’s school. They are an opportunity to share information about your child's progress, interests and needs. They also help the teacher understand more about your child. By asking questions and finding out more about the information on your child’s report you have an opportunity to become further involved in your child's learning and give support where needed.

Before the Interview

- Clarify if your child is expected to attend and what role s/he will play in the interview.
- Reflect on what you know about your child as a learner. Your insights are invaluable in parent/teacher conversations.
- Are there any particular areas of learning (e.g. reading, maths, social skills) that you would like to discuss?
- Are there any family/home issues (e.g. change in living or working arrangements, unexpected loss/grief, illness) that your child's the teacher may need to aware of to be of support to your child?
- Talk with your child before the interview and ask him/her if there is anything in particular he/she would like raised at the interview.
- Plan and write down your specific questions/comments before the interview.
- Know where and at what time the interview will be held.

Parent/Teacher Interview Checklist

You may wish to prepare questions and/or comments about some of the following areas:

- Child’s progress, strengths and challenges
  - Academically, socially, emotionally.
- Child’s attitude to school and in class
  - Attention and task completion
  - Punctuality
  - Independence
  - Initiative.
- Child’s commitment to school’s expectations
  - In class
  - In the playground
  - School routines.
- Child’s relationship with peers
  - Friendships
  - Team work/collaboration.
- How to help at home
  - Homework routine
  - Time management/organisation
  - Hints or strategies to support their learning.
- Curriculum and school/class activities
  - Program for the term/year
  - Topics being covered.
  - School and class activities/traditions/celebrations
  - How parents can help out in the school/classroom.
Four key questions to ask
1. What have you observed about my child as a learner?
2. Is there anything about my child's learning or social needs that I should know?
3. What can I share with you about my child's learning style, strengths and challenges that would support you?
4. What can I do as a parent to help my child progress in school this year?

Other questions you may like to ask:
- What opportunities are there for me to learn about what you are covering in class?
- What opportunities are there to see examples of my child’s work?
- How does my child participate in class discussions/class room activities, seek support?
- What activities does my child seem to enjoy the most at school?
- How would you describe my child’s ability to work collaboratively?
- How would you describe my child’s social skills both in the class and in the playground?
- How would you describe my child’s ability to cooperate, work independently, follow directions and follow the rules and routines during class time?
- What home resources would support what is going on at school right now?
- How is my child progressing in comparison to others in his/her year level?
- Can you tell me the best time and way to contact you if I have a query or concern?
- What are some ways I can help out in the classroom or in the school community?

During the Interview
- Approach the interview with a positive and relaxed attitude.
- See it as an opportunity for a two-way discussion where you will be informed as well as actively contribute.

Communication
- Set the scene for a positive and constructive meeting by using open and positive body language.
- Respect the teacher’s professional skills and expertise.
- Be respectfully assertive.
- Be constructive.
- Discuss issues without getting personal.
- Express your needs and concerns calmly.
- Remember you both want what’s best for your child.

Listen
- The best communicators are keen listeners.
- Clarify points you don’t understand and if you don’t understand the ‘jargon’ ask for it to be described another way.

After the Interview
Discuss the meeting with your child
- Talk about his/her strengths and celebrate these.
- Talk about the ideas you discussed to continue to support his/her learning.
- Decide together on some age appropriate goals.

Follow up agreed action as soon as possible
Did the teacher:-
- Recommend resources or strategies?
- Offer ideas that support your child’s homework routine?
- Propose accessing additional support?

Remember:
- Formal parent/teacher interviews are only one form of communication between you & your child’s teacher.
- Keep connected using mutually agreed forms of school/home communication such as email, your child’s diary, communication book, SMS or phone.
- An important part of the parent’s role begins after the interview.

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