

Two Models for Collaborating with Parents

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Parents are important members of our learning community. They help with fundraising and donate hours volunteering to keep our school a healthy, safe and a rich place to learn. As an intermediate classroom teacher and a parent, I feel that feedback on students learning is too often limited to report card and marks and 15 minutes conferences.

For the past three years, I have created some collaboration models in order to connect and facilitate conversations with our parent community. I have realized that a community of parents is the richest support group and they can learn from each other when given good questions.

THE WORLD CAFÉ

We proposed to facilitate an information session about homework and how to support your child's learning at home.

Steps

1. Propose topic to PAC and have them choose
2. Teachers and administrators get together and plan the information sessions
3. Design three or four good questions
4. Begin the session with a 10 to 15 minute presentation sharing background information (in my case, our parents love statistics) on the topic
5. Provide questions and have teachers record solutions discussed by parents

Questions used to prompt conversations

How can I help my child break down the task?

How do I ask my child about their homework?

How do you know if your child needs help?

What is my reaction when I realize that my child is overwhelmed with unfinished work?

How do you know they have completed their work?

How does an environment that is conducive to completing homework look/sound like?

THE LEARNING RECITAL

This year, I chose to invite parents in my classroom for two purposes; to observe their own child learn and to get more acquainted with new instructional strategies. I gave them an observation form to complete as they observed and to collaborate on establishing learning goals with the child at the end of the morning.

Quotes from parents

Meeting Learning Diversity

"Today's Assignment is explained by asking the kids to call out what to do, using an overhead projector for notes and diagrams, and giving the kids options for how to complete it".

"Nice teacher balance of instruction and freedom to do the work within your own parameters".

"They are an open acknowledgment that all these kids are different, they will attend to instruction differently, produce different amounts and quality of work."

Sharing with a Partner

"The clock system is terrific, efficient and cuts down on time wasting choosing a partner and avoids feeling being hurt".

Changes

"A lot has changed since I was in Grade six. I think the way the material is presented is much more interesting and engaging".

"Learning a much more communal experience; peers as teachers"

"Things are different from when I was in Grade six. It is more interactive between teacher and students, students and students in a productive way."

Instructions

"Teacher is very involved at all time by walking around and checking in with all students".

Concerns

"A lot of desks are small and wobbly. Could that affect their writing?"

"I can see why my daughter is very upset about her seating arrangement!"