

Getting Your Child to Talk About Their School Day

Social media has exploded with pictures of everybody's children getting ready for their first days back to school. They say a picture is worth a thousand words and I know all of you are very grateful when you are lucky enough to see your child in Tweets during the school day from your child's teacher and/or Mrs. Sherman. But pictures don't really tell all, and I know when your child comes home, you anxiously await hearing about your child's day and their experiences. However, while some children come home full of excitement and ready to share everything, there are those children who report absolutely nothing. If you have one of these children, you are certainly not alone. It can be quite frustrating when all you hear about your child's day is information from others.

As far as increasing your child's communication, there is no secret that works for every child, but last fall, I posted some general guidelines (See the post entitled "Getting the Conversation Started"). Some of these suggestions included modeling, utilizing games, helping children to label their feelings, and/or opening up topics by offering information you've heard from other parents/children. Avoiding simple yes/no questions and asking more open ended ones was also recommended, and recently I came across a list of specific open ended questions from an article on simplesimon.com that may be helpful for drawing out some good pieces of information. Here were the top 25 suggested for elementary aged children:

1. What was the best/worst thing that happened at school today?
2. Tell me something that made you laugh today.
3. If you had the choice, who would you like to sit next to/not sit next to in class? Why?
4. Where is the coolest place to be at school?
5. Tell me a weird word (or something weird) you heard today.
6. If I called your teacher tonight, what would she tell me about you?
7. How did you help someone today?
8. How did somebody help you today?
9. Tell me one thing that you learned today.
10. When were you the happiest today?
11. When were you bored today?
12. If an alien spaceship came to your class and beamed up someone, who would you want them to take?

13. Who would you like to play with at recess that you've never played with before?
14. Tell me something good that happened today.
15. What word did your teacher say the most today?
16. What do you think you should do/learn more of at school?
17. What do you think you should do/learn less of at school?
18. Who in your class do you think you could be nicer too?
19. Where do you play the most at recess?
20. Who is the funniest person in your class? Why is he/she so funny?
21. What was your favorite part of lunch?
22. If you got to be the teacher tomorrow, what would you do?
23. What's something special that happened today that you wished happened every day?
24. If you could switch seats with anyone in your class, who would you trade with? Why?
25. Tell me about three different times you used your pencil today at school.

I've tried many of these on my own elementary aged children (not all at once of course, otherwise, it changes from a conversation to an inquisition). My personal favorite is number 7, asking how they helped someone. If you ask this one on a regular basis, it will focus them on the importance of helping others. At first, asking for three different times they used their pencil during the day seemed a little silly. However, I actually received pretty good information about pictures they drew and topics they had written about. Make sure you prepare yourself for the "weird word" question. I never thought regular words could be so "weird" to them! Although the spaceship question may seem a little out there (no pun intended), it's a very non-threatening way to find out which child may be bothersome to yours. In general, not only did many of these questions give me some good information about my child's day, they also opened up some good topics for ongoing conversation. If anyone has some good ones of their own, please share them with me, because I'd love to keep updating this list for the future!

Welcome Back to School!

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