



Back to School Thoughts

By Eva de Gosztanyi

As the “Back to School” ads fill the flyers, and fall is in the air, parents and teachers are preparing for the new school year.

Many teachers are already spending time preparing for the year ahead with their students. Trips are being made to the Teacher Store to find new and interesting items. Bookstores are being scoured for just the right ones that will engage the students and bulletin boards are being set up to make the classroom more appealing.

As a parent, you are wondering, “How will my child do this year? “ Will he be accepted by the children in his class?” and, more importantly, you are likely asking, “Will she like her teacher?” and “Will his teacher like him?” Intuitively, you know that the relationship between your child and his teacher is key to a successful school year. And yet, we often leave this relationship to chance or take it for granted that good intentions will make it work.

In fact, there is nothing more significant than this relationship for a child’s learning and growth. Children flourish when parents and the school staff work together.

So how can we help get this important relationship off to a good start?” The first step actually happens between the adults. While it might be tempting to instruct your child to “Listen to your teacher.” Or, “I want you to be good for your teacher,” in actual fact, if we understand the nature of the attachment dynamic, it is up to us as the adults to ensure that our children take a liking to their teacher. And we do this best by speaking positively about the teacher and letting our child know that we believe that the teacher is on “our team.”

In our busy world, it is a definite challenge for parents and teachers to develop this necessary relationship. In my role as school psychologist and behaviour consultant, I encourage teachers to find ways to communicate with parents and students before the school year starts. It could be via a post card or a quick phone-call home that would serve as an introduction about themselves and to let the parents and child know that they are anticipating the connection.

In the case of a child who in the past has had difficulty adjusting to the school setting, I urge meetings before school starts so that parents and staff can get to know each other. Most teachers whom I know, appreciate it when parents share with them an understanding of their child’s needs. Sometimes the student and teacher need to meet outside the hustle and bustle of the first days of school in order to get to know each other. Short periods of one-on-one time can go a long way both in terms of building a relationship and also for helping a student to really learn basic classroom routines.

September “Open House” events are another great time to build relationships. Teachers are so appreciative when parents attend. After hearing from the teacher about her expectations, if you sense that adjustments need to be made for your child, do not hesitate to contact the school to set up a meeting.

I encourage parents and teachers to take a moment to think of the child as an individual, who is growing and developing in the warmth of their caring and to work together to create the conditions that promote this growth.

I wish you and your children a wonderful 2010-2011 school year!

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