

Meet the Parents – Successful Information Sessions

Information sessions for parents and carers are important occasions for setting the tone for the year and building relationships.

For 99% of parents the MOST important thing in their world is their child! More important than their house, their car or anything they own. This places a tremendous amount of responsibility on us. We are not only charged with the responsibility to look after them but to educate them as well. Whilst this is a massive responsibility, it is also a tremendous opportunity to make a real difference in people's lives.

First impressions count!

- Be organised – set the classroom up to be interesting (ensure displays are error free)
- Be punctual – start and finish on time
- Be interested – know something about their child
- Be interesting – what are some of the things that the students will be learning about
- Be engaging – now is not the time to be shy or flippant with your comments
- Be informative – provide information on the topics listed in the Key Points column and support them with a handout (useful for those who can't attend)
- Be warm – show you care about the students
- Be real – share something about you, your family or interests
- Be clear – calmly communicate your expectations
- Be open – allow time for questions at the end of your presentation
- Be professional – if parents want to discuss individual concerns, handle this sensitively, make an appointment if necessary

**Wear a smile and
have friends.**

**Wear a scowl and
have wrinkles.**

George Eliot

Consider the session from the parents' viewpoint. They come along to the session to meet and get to know their child's teacher, to hear about the routines and expectations that will operate in the classroom and to learn about how they can assist their child to succeed. Parents want to leave the session with confidence that you have their child's best interests at heart. They are looking for teachers to be confident, approachable and fair.

Developing a trusting partnership between the school and the home not only benefits the student but can help reduce the intensity of issues when they arise. Parents who trust the staff of the school are far more likely to give the school the benefit of the doubt and be more forgiving of a mistake. Where trust is not evident, parents are more likely to be cautious and suspicious. Parent information sessions are important opportunities for building trust with parents.

Parents' perceptions of their child's teacher are often based on this event. In setting the tone I love the Bill Roger's term '*Warm yet demanding*'. Parents want a teacher who cares about their child but also has expectations that they will achieve and make progress. They want to be reassured that you know what you are doing.

If issues relating to the needs of individual students are raised, politely defer them to an individual discussion at the end of the session. If 5 minutes isn't enough time to discuss the issues raised by a parent then offering an appointment to ensure that you can allocate sufficient time is usually wise.

Key points

Communication – best methods and times to contact you, likely timeline for you to respond

Homework – routine, expectations

Curriculum overview – broad description of units covered, make it interesting and show its relevance (real world - not a boring list of learning objectives)

How can they help – practical ways they can assist their child

Classroom routines – brief outline of how a typical day or lesson works

Relevant school policies and procedures e.g. school absences, behaviour management

Coming events including camps etc.

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