



Happy Staff = Happy School

Positive Parent Information Sessions

Developing a trusting partnership between the school and the home not only benefits the student but can reduce stress on school staff. 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.

Information evenings for parents are important occasions for starting to build trust with parents and setting the tone for a productive year.

It can be helpful to 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.

Parent Information sessions are one of the key Moments of Truth for parents. A *Moment of Truth* is any interaction in which the client comes into contact with our services and forms an impression of our school. The concept originated in Scandinavian Airlines by CEO Jan Carlson.

Parents' perceptions of their child's teacher are often based on this event. The tone of the session sets the tone for the relationship for the rest of the year. 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 often want to make a personal connection. They want to see the teacher as 'real' and to be reassured that you know what you are doing.

I never cease to be amazed at the number of teachers who are daunted at the prospect of presenting to parents. Parents don't want a 'slick' presentation, they want to leave with the confidence that their child is in good hands. Having a summary (single page) handout with your key messages is also important and demonstrates that you are organised and know what you are doing.

Presenting the classroom in a positive light is essential. The classroom needs to be clean, attractive and inviting. It's true – FIRST IMPRESSIONS do count! Displays need to be interesting and error free. If you are fortunate to have an interactive whiteboard – use it! If you have computers in your classroom, have them turned on and linked to something relevant to your lessons.

Whilst it can be challenging to be presenting enthusiastically to a Parent Information session at the end of a long school day, it is important and worthwhile. It doesn't have to be 'all bells and whistles' but it does need to show you care, are organised and keen to help their child.

Starting and finishing on time are important. Allow time for questions at the end of your presentation or at key intervals. If one parent asks a question, there are probably a number of others who want to know but weren't confident enough to ask. 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 thoroughly discuss the issues raised by a parent then offering an appointment to ensure that you can allocate sufficient time is usually wise.

Suggested points to cover

Communication

best methods and times to contact you, likely timeline for response

Homework expectations

Curriculum overview

broad description of units covered or expected outcomes, try to make it interesting

How they can help

practical things they can do eg read with their child, test spelling, check student diary

Classroom routines

a brief outline of a typical day or lesson

Relevant school policies

eg school absences, behavior management

Coming events eg camps

Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school.

Albert Einstein

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