

Back-to-School Talking Points for Classroom Teachers to Welcome Parents & Families

Classroom teachers may want to consider using some of the talking points below when communicating with parents about the Common Core State Standards.

Classroom conversations are unique to every teacher, grade level, subject matter, school, and district. Teachers know curriculum, content, and the teaching process best and these CCSS idea-starters are a few points that may be of interest to parents:

1. A window to a Common Core classroom (If you visit my classroom you might see.....);
2. *Brief* classroom examples of relevant grade appropriate ELA & mathematics shifts;
3. How to help with homework (Some examples are included);
4. Help children “learn how to learn”; and
5. How to help children gain insight with technology.

1. A window to a Common Core classroom (If you visit my classroom you might see.....)

- Students collaborating with others to complete tasks and solve problems successfully;
- Students working as part of a team to identify goals;
- Students participating in a team to plan problem-solving steps and identify resources necessary to meet group goals;
- Students communicating and combining multiple points of view to meet group goals; and
- Students sharing their ideas in written, oral, and other artistic presentations, etc.

2. *Brief* classroom example of relevant grade appropriate ELA & mathematics shifts

(Relevant examples selected by teacher)

- Math Common Core for all grade levels: <http://achievethecore.org/dashboard/300/search/1/2/0/1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8/9/10/11/12/page/774/focus-by-grade-level-list-pg>
- English Language Arts: <http://www.cgcs.org/Domain/36>

3. How to help with homework

(Teachers provide all logistical information on their homework practices. The following information is relative to Common Core learning.)

- There are many important ways that you can help your child learn outside of the classroom. Don't worry; you don't have to be an expert in any subject area to help with homework.
- The purpose of homework has always been to give students the opportunity to use new knowledge and practice new skills that were introduced in the classroom. Due to the rapid addition of new information and

the advancement of technology, your child's classroom projects and homework assignments are different from those in the past.

- When using the Common Core State Standards, homework problems are designed to help students develop specific skills rather than just get a specific answer. The assignment may be an effort to find out *how* your child solves a problem or arrives at an answer rather than just the answer itself.
- Parents want their child to succeed in school so naturally, they want to help their child with homework, but that isn't always the best way to be sure they are learning. It is best to let me know that he or she is struggling with the homework or if they are not challenged by completing the work. Together, you and I can make adjustments and find the best assignments to support learning.
- The amount of help you should give your child depends on his or her grade level and study habits. Younger students often need extra homework help. However, it doesn't matter the age or grade level your child is in, you can always help your child by asking questions, praising progress, monitoring how your child uses the internet and other resources to get new knowledge, and communicating directly with me.
- Show your child that you think homework is important. One of the best ways that parents can help their child is by asking supportive questions about homework and projects done in school.

SAMPLE

Suggestions for Talking To Your Child about Schoolwork and Homework

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| 1. Questions for clarification: | What does _____ mean?
Why is the problem worded that way?
How does this relate to what you are learning in other subjects? |
| 2. Questions that probe assumptions: | What could we assume instead?
How can you verify or disprove that assumption? |
| 3. Questions that probe reasons and evidence: | What would be an example?
Is that similar to something else? What?
How is that similar to your example? |
| 4. Questions about viewpoints and perspectives: | What could you do instead?
What is another way to look at it?
Explain why it is necessary or beneficial, and who benefits? |
| 5. Questions that probe implications and consequences: | Why is that the best answer?
What generalizations can you make?
What are the consequences of that assumption?
How does _____ affect _____?
How does _____ tie in with what you learned before? |
| 6. Questions about the question: | What does _____ mean?
What was the point of this question?
Why do you think your teacher asked this question?
How does _____ apply to everyday life?
Why do you think that is important? |

4. Help your child “learn how to learn”

- The Common Core State Standards define *what* students must learn and be able to do in order to be college and career ready. *How* they learn to do that is very important too.
- What is college and career readiness?
 - College and career readiness is the K-12 preparation that allows students to gain, and build on, the knowledge and skills required to perform well in entry-level college classes and as a valued employee who can contribute to their profession in the workplace. When students are college and career ready they are able to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world situations.
- How can your child grow to be a successful and responsible learner?
 - At all grade levels students need to – and are able to – develop a level of independence for their own learning. The Common Core defines ways that students must show us how they grow and increase their knowledge and abilities. Students have a responsibility to do their best, ask for help when they need it, observe how well they are learning, have some idea of how they learn, and take control of their learning behaviors. This is called self-regulated learning, and instilling it in your children is perhaps the best way that you can support your child with all schoolwork.
 - You don’t need to have subject matter expertise but you can guide your child in becoming a self-regulated learner. Observe his or her strengths and reinforce the skills used to find answers or solve problems. Encourage your child to use the knowledge they have acquired and then apply it to other situations. Recalling that success encourages a student to continue to repeat the positive behaviors and eventually they will take control of finding ways to reach success repeatedly. In Common Core classrooms, self-regulated learning occurs when a student gains new knowledge, carefully observes and considers his options for using that knowledge, and takes action that demonstrates what he has learned. The use of successful self-regulated learning strategies accounts for much of a student’s success in school.
 - You can work with your child’s teachers to identify and adapt appropriate qualities of a successful self-regulated learner.

SAMPLE

Qualities of Successful Self-Regulated Learners

- Students care about the quality of their work and put in extra effort to do things thoroughly and well.
- Students know and can apply a variety of study skills and strategies to meet the demands of a task.
- Students work well independently but ask for help when they need it.
- Students set a goal for each learning task, monitor their progress towards the goal, and adapt their approach as needed to successfully complete a task or solve a problem.
- Students delay gratification, refocus after distractions, and maintain momentum until they reach their goal.
- Students in upper grades monitor their comprehension as they learn, recognize when they become confused or encounter obstacles, diagnose barriers to their success, and select strategies to work through them.
- Students routinely reflect on their learning experiences and apply what they learned to new situations.
- Students are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and anticipate working harder in some areas.
- Students use setbacks as opportunities for feedback and apply lessons learned to improve future efforts.
- Students continue looking for new ways to learn challenging material and solve difficult problems.

5. Gain insight with technology

(Please let me know if you prefer that I send copies of online information home with your child.)

- Visit my webpage to see what your child is learning each week ([URL address](#));
- Visit the school's website to keep up-to-date on programs and activities ([URL address](#)), and
- Visit the New Jersey Department of Education webpage dedicated to providing information to families and communities. Newsletters are developed around current education issues in our state. To subscribe or view the online version of the newsletters go to <http://www.nj.gov/education/parents/newsletter/>.