

Superintendent's November 2010 Newsletter

Open, honest, and frequent communication is critical to maintaining healthy relationships. This is true of any relationship including that of a parent and child. Establishing good communication habits begin when your child is young. Greet your child with a question about his day, and you'll discover more about his life. Never ask, "How was your day?" Instead, be more specific with "What was the best thing about today?" Then, actively listen to his response. This means really hearing what your child is saying – as well as what he may NOT be saying. If you act disinterested, he will shut down and tell you "fine." Soon, you will get the "fine" response to other questions.

Let your child know you care by opening up and sharing details from your day. Communicating with your child about yourself will help her open up and pave the way for her to share interesting stories about what happened at school or on the playground or with her friends. Set aside time during dinner every night to discuss each family member's day, or if dinner isn't a time when your family comes together, then breakfast. Our lives are so full these days that we always seem to be in a rush. Slow down, schedule a date with your child each week, and let her decide what to do. Go for a walk. Read together. Learn something new together. Enjoy a family game night once a month. Let your child invite a friend.

As your child gets older, you may want to adjust the type of activities that you do with him, but it is as important as ever to maintain the open communication channels you've developed. Your child will be exposed to many new people, places, and experiences. It is critical to have conversations with your child about what to do in the event that he is approached by a stranger, touched inappropriately by someone he knows, finds himself lost in unfamiliar surroundings, harassed by classmates, offered drugs or alcohol, or in other untenable situations. Your child needs to be able to communicate the effects of these difficult situations to you and know that you will listen non-judgmentally and that you will support him.

Whether your child is young or a teenager, building bonds and developing good communication skills are very important to your child's well-being in many ways. People say it all the time and they're right: children grow up in an instant. My own adult son, it seems, was in elementary school just last week. Start building strong open lines of communication now. Initiate conversations with your child. Listen. Use everyday opportunities to talk. Be honest. Be patient. Talk about difficult topics. Talk about them again. And, always remember to listen to your child.

Sincerely,
Glen Ishiwata