



WHAT WORKS IN EDUCATION
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Parents: 19 Meaningful Questions You Should Ask Your Child's Teacher

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Back-to-school content is usually focused on teachers and students, and as these two groups will have the largest workload ahead of them, that makes sense.

But for students, the ultimate support system is not an expert teacher, but an informed and supportive family. One of the most significant challenges facing formal education in the United States is the chasm separating schools and communities. The more informed a family is, the more seamlessly they'll connect to so many other edu-constructs, from extracurricular activities and tutoring to reading programs and school-related events.

While schools (hopefully) work to update themselves and the way students learn within them, many parents have to work with what's available to them. With the exception of in-depth content like Edutopia's guides (<http://www.edutopia.org/parent-21st-century-learning-resource-guide>), much of the "parent stuff" you'll find through Googling is decent enough, but it can be surface level or otherwise completely unrelated to process of learning. Some common examples:

- "Ask them what they did today."
- "Help them with homework."
- "Help them with separation anxiety."

- "Talk to them about their struggles."
- "Get them a tutor."

But these kind of topical interactions aren't always enough, nor do they do anything at all to create transparency between schools and communities.

So, in pursuit of that transparency, below are some questions to better clarify what's happening in the classroom, and then help you decide on the kind of *non-superficial* actions you can perform at home to truly support the learning of your child. Many of the questions may seem a bit direct, but I don't know any teachers who would take offense to them. In fact, most of my colleagues would welcome the kind of added capacity that questions like these could lead to. Many of these questions are rarely the subject of parent-teacher interactions, but – well, that's kind of the point.

Just don't ask them all at once. In fact, maybe pick two and hope for the best.

19 Questions Your Child's Teacher Would (Probably) Love to Answer

1. What academic standards do you use, and what do I need to know about them?
2. How will you respond if or when my child struggles in class?
3. What are the most important and complex (content-related) ideas my child needs to understand by the end of the year?
4. Do you focus on strengths or weaknesses?
5. How are creativity and innovative thinking used on a daily basis in your classroom?
6. How is critical thinking used on a daily basis in your classroom?
7. How are assessments designed to promote learning rather than simple measurement?
8. What can I do to support literacy in my home?
9. What kinds of questions do you suggest that I ask my children on a daily basis about your class?
10. How exactly is learning personalized in your classroom? In the school?
11. How do you measure academic progress?
12. What are the most common instructional or literacy strategies you will use this year?
13. What learning models do you use (e.g., project-based learning, mobile learning, game-based learning, etc.), and what do you see as the primary benefits of that approach?
14. What are the best school or district resources for students and/or families that no one uses?
15. Is there technology you'd recommend that can help support my child in self-directed learning?
16. What are the most common barriers you see to academic progress in your classroom?
17. How is education changing?
18. How do you see the role of the teacher in the learning process?
19. What am I not asking but should be?

And when you get interesting or surprising answers to these questions, please share them in the comments section below.

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