

Things that you can say to your child that will make all the difference

“Show Me, Tell Me, Talk to Me”

Your child will be learning three different things throughout their years at school.

1. They will be learning knowledge

Facts that we think they need to know. This is information that we know is true and the way we answer a knowledge question will be either right or wrong. For example: Paris is the capital of France. That's knowledge.

2. They will be learning skills

Finding out how to do things. Skills are practical and can be described as 'being able' to do something. For example: being able to tie shoe laces, being able to read a map, being able to perform an operation. There are skills within every subject that children study at school; from maths to art to history to science to music. Skills take time to develop and as we learn, we learn skills in small, progressive steps.

3. They will be learning understanding

Developing a sense of the meaning behind why we know and do things. Understanding involves a combination of accumulated knowledge, practised skills and reflection over time.

So, at the end of the school day, when you talk to your child about their learning, here are some ways to talk to them that might help you both:

When your child says they've learned some facts in school, say **'Wow. Tell me what you know about that.'** This is how you help your child learn knowledge.

When your child says they've learned how to do something in school, say **'Wow. Show me how to do that.'** This is how you help your child learn a skill (don't forget they might be at the very beginning stage of learning that skill. No one can master a skill overnight. In fact it takes 1000's of hours of practice to truly master any skill. That's why being patient and encouraging practice of any skill is so important).

When your child says they now understand something, say **'Wow. Talk to me about that.'** This is how you help your child develop a deeper sense of that understanding. Again, your child will be at the very beginning stage of that understanding. But the more you can both talk about understanding something, and the more your child expands on the related knowledge, and practises the related skills, then the more likely they will develop an even better understanding.

The ten things you can say to your child... ...that will make all the difference

1. Say to your child the word 'yet' as often as you can.

For example, when your child says 'I can't do fractions' you say 'you can't do fractions yet'. Help them to see the possibility that they will be able to achieve it in the future.

2. Say to your child: 'you're getting better' whenever the opportunity allows.

Learning is all about improvement and learning a skill needs patience and practice and practice and practice to improve. Your child needs lots of support along the way.

3. Say to your child: 'what have you learned today?'

This question is a lot more specific than 'what did you do today?'

4. Say encouraging things as often as you can when your child is *beginning* to learn something new and encourage them when something still isn't perfect.

Remember how much encouragement you gave your child when they took their first wobbly steps? Children need that same encouragement whenever they start learning something new. Learning is always harder at the beginning.

5. Say things to your child to show you can see that there's improvement, however small. Compare 'then' and 'now' and praise the difference.

Learning is about getting better; lots of 'getting better' steps.

6. Say to your child: 'of course you've made a mistake, but keep going, you're learning.'

Every child needs to know that making mistakes is all part of the learning process. Mistakes can

be good because you can learn from them. You never really learn something well if you don't make mistakes along the way. Make sure your child knows that mistakes are OK.

7. Say to your child: 'your brain is wired in lots of different ways, some ways are better than others. Let's try to make each part work as well as it can.'

Few of us will be brilliant at everything but we can get better at everything.

8. Say to your child: 'take a break, do some exercise, then start learning again.'

The brain needs blood, oxygen and rest to keep going. If it doesn't get them then it doesn't keep going.

9. Say to your child: 'if you find facts difficult to remember then it's ok to use a 'hook' to help you remember.'

There are just too many facts to remember so your child should only worry about remembering the ones that really matter. For those, it's perfectly fine to give their brain some help if they need to. For example VIGBYOR spells out all the colours of the rainbow. So does the rhyme *Richard Of York Goes By In Violet*; anything to trigger the brain to remember is good.

10. Say to your child: 'I found x easy to learn, but I had to work harder at y.'

Make sure your child knows you went through similar learning struggles as they are going through. Show your child realistic models of learning; don't fake your own excellence. On the other hand don't promote inabilities either – unless you are promoting how much better you *could* have been if only you'd kept trying.

The ten things you can do with your child to help them develop an understanding of who they are and their place in the world

1. Value similarities and differences

From their earliest years, help your child to be aware that we all share similarities as well as differences. People, just like plants and animals, all have the same basic needs of shelter, food and care but, like plants and animals, there are differences in people too; in their appearance, where they live, the food they eat, their interests and lifestyles, their beliefs and cultures. The differences are what make people so interesting. Find opportunities in everyday life to help your child to develop an understanding of this.

2. Look for similarities before the differences

When talking with your child about others, value the differences but, importantly, emphasise the similarities. Sometimes just looking for similarities first, before talking about the differences, can change the way we think about people.

3. Help your child develop a sense of their own identity

Look at your own family history. Talk about where all your family members were born and have lived. Talk about the celebrations you have and the traditions you follow and help your child to know why these are important to your family. Talk about other things that make your family unique.

4. Help your child to develop a sense of others

Help your child to see things from the point of view of other people. Talk about the celebrations and traditions of your friends and neighbours. Everyone does things in different ways and for different reasons. Help your child to understand that different doesn't mean wrong.

There is a quote from Harper Lee's book *To Kill A Mockingbird* that might help you: "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." Encourage your child to put themselves into 'other people's shoes and have a good walk around'. They could think about other children or people in their school or in their community or in other places in the world. What does your child and your family have in common with these children or people?

5. Get a world map and display it where you can all see it

The kitchen is a great location, or somewhere that your whole family gathers together. Then every time you talk about a different place in the world, you can take a look at the map to find out where it is. Ask your child to find the country it is located in and perhaps identify who has visited or lived there and what makes the place similar and different to your own.

6. Explore the food you eat

Think about the food you eat each day and try to find out where the ingredients come from to make your meal. For example, if you are making pizza, ask yourselves: where does the cheese come from, and the tomatoes, and the flour for the dough? What about the olives? Alternatively, you could look in your fridge or store cupboard and look at the labels to see where the food you have bought comes from.

Talk about how we depend on so many different countries for the food that we enjoy. You could even eat your way around the world, exploring a food, dish or recipe from a different country each week.

7. Find out where things are made

Help your child to look at the labels of their clothes, their toys and the everyday things around you to find out where they were made. Talk about how these items have found their way from the country they were made in to your local store – this can lead to some really interesting discussions about trade and transport. You could use your world map to locate these different places.

8. Enjoy music and stories from other countries

Collect stories from around the world. This can include traditional folk and fairytales from other countries, and stories about other countries too. You could read your way around the world. You can do the same with music too.

9. Find out what's happening around the world

Encourage your child to follow news around the world on a child-friendly news website or news source such as CBBC or First News, or you may find this page of the Newseum website helpful: www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/ Choose a global news story and talk about this with your family. Think about the impact of this news story on the children and adults of that country, and of your own country too.

10. Talk about the roles people play and the jobs people do

Talk about the people that your child comes across in everyday life – the cook, the office manager, the teacher and the caretaker at school. Help your child to realise that each one of these people has an important part to play in making the school function well. Think about all the people in your local community and talk about how important it is to have someone who runs the shop, who helps people when they are ill, who collects the rubbish, and who teaches children. Help your child to value the work that everyone does.

All of these activities will help your child to start developing a sense of themselves and of others. This is essential for the development of international mindedness; a vital part of learning and a fundamental part of the International Primary Curriculum. To find out more about the IPC visit www.greatlearning.com/ipc