



Making the Most of the Parent-Mentor Meeting

The regular meetings between parents and their child's mentor are a valuable assistance to parents in the exercise of their privilege and duty as 'first educators'. The parents receive the mentor's full support through...

- a) *objective observations and advice*
- b) *coordination of the professional services of the College*
- c) *service of personal example, guidance and friendship towards their child.*

The greater the cooperation, confidence, and ultimately friendship, which exists between the parents and mentor, the more effectively the parents will be able to carry out their own responsibility of directing the integral, whole-person, development of their child.

The success of the mentoring program rests on this trust and on the regularity of the meetings.

General Approaches

1. Make family life fun.

Use initiative to create enjoyable weekly family times, lively family meals, outings together, family customs and traditions.

2. Become good friends of the parents of your child's friends.

When the teenage years arrive, your son or daughter will sometimes pay more attention to peer group than to parents. A positive peer group, and families who are all good friends and a support for each other are the key to avoiding so many needless teenage complications.

3. Do your homework.

Read good parenting literature. Much is available through your child's mentor. Consider attending a Family Education Course.

4. Set yourself your own term parenting goal.

Talk with your husband or wife. Decide on something to be achieved by the end of the term which will help you be a better parent. (Hint: Start with the goal of being a living example of the goal you wish your son or daughter to achieve.)

5. Be cheerful and positive.

Work on a cheerful positive temperament for yourself. No matter what he gets up to your child must be able to turn to you and talk about it.

Before the Meeting

1. Buy a notebook.

2. Have you organized your parent-mentor meeting this term?

Please book early in the term. Send back the booking form or simply ring the College office to make the appointment.

3. Evaluate last parent-mentor meeting goals.

With your spouse evaluate the goals set in the last interview. Consider causes for any failure of your son or daughter to achieve the goals. Was each goal specified realistic? Did your child see the goal as important? Did he or she remember the targets? What have you learned about your son or daughter from his efforts during this term?

4. Discuss the broader issues.

Consider: character strengths and weaknesses; growth in personal responsibility; the qualities that you would like your child to possess as an adult... to be happy, generous, self-directed, able to apologise, resolute, etc; consider virtues to be highlighted at your child's present age; intellectual, physical, social, cultural development; spiritual growth; career options.

5. Evaluate your own performance.

Did you set a strategy for ongoing follow up of the goals from the interview? Did you provide enough encouragement and incentive? Were you cheerful and even keeled? Are you giving good example in the specific area you want your child to improve in? Was your follow up regular enough? Did you and your spouse have consistent expectations? What have you learned about yourself from your efforts this term?

6. Be positive.

Parents' diligent efforts always bear fruit over time. Look on problems as opportunities.

During the Meeting

1. Bring a notebook.

2. Review last term's goals.

The quality of this review largely depends on prior preparation. There will be much greater objectivity and productivity in the discussion if thought has gone in before hand. The mentor will have discussed your child's overall progress with his teachers.

3. Swap other impressions and information.

Review of last report, topical issues in the class and schools, etc.

4. Refocus on key issues.

Make sure that the parent-tutor meeting is coming to grips with character issues and growth in virtue. Your child's academic motivation is, to a large extent, a consequence of his character development.

5. Set goals for the coming term.

This may be a matter of refining earlier goals, or restating them with a change of emphasis. Don't get anxious if the same issues pop up in successive terms - it could be a sign of superficiality if they did not. Recurrent issues however do require realistic, specific, achievable goals so that there is progress. Unrealistic goals make parental and tutor follow up ineffective, and the whole process rather discouraging.

6. Fix a follow-up strategy.

This may involve ways to help your child take responsibility for the goal, regular tutor-mentor link up during the term, father-son and mother-daughter time together, etc.

7. Restate and record goals.

Parents and mentor note the goals and the strategy which will be followed. Once written down, it is easier for the parents to talk about the goals as the term goes on, keeping them high on their own list of priorities, and generally to give their child all the help (daily encouragement, follow up, etc.) needed to achieve it.

After The Meeting...Ongoing Follow-up

1. Work together with your spouse.

Talk each week about how your son or daughter is progressing. Monitor you own efforts to help.

2. Implement the follow up strategy.

Remember that it is your child's goal, not yours. Help children to take responsibility. Help your son or daughter evaluate progress frequently.

3. Spend time with your child, listen...and only then, talk.

Go to your child's level; understand what is on his or her mind; be a trusted friend whose advice is valued. Share common interests. Motivate and encourage rather than correct and lecture.

4. Link up with your child's mentor whenever it seems useful.

Your child's mentor is there to support you in your task, and is your first link with the College. Feel free to call the mentor. The interview each term is really a minimum. A phone call at the right time, a brief update at a parent function, or an extra meeting can all do much to increase the effectiveness of the cooperation.

Remember

An essential key to your child's full personal development is that he or she has personalized goals. These goals must be easy to remember, specific, achievable, and able to be evaluated. If the goals at each moment are appropriate, and if your son or daughter has taken these goals to heart, with your support and with God's grace your child will develop unique talents and will reach his or her complete potential. You will see your child, as the years pass, amazingly happy and successful.