

Parent Partnership

Introduction

Education is a shared partnership between parents, students and the school. In addition to formal meetings related to education, there are a number of activities in which parents are encouraged to take part, such as sports events, concerts, plays, orientation events and information evenings. The Parents' Committee and Ashbury Guild also provide parents with an opportunity to be involved with the school. You can read about our volunteer work at www.ashbury.ca/volunteer.

In order to enhance communication between parents, students and the school we ask that you follow these guidelines. The student's Form Teacher (Junior School) or Teacher Advisor (Senior School) is the main contact between the school and home for questions of a general nature. We strive to teach students to be independent learners, to advocate for themselves and to be resilient. For questions regarding specific academic courses, students are asked to contact the subject teacher directly. For questions regarding sports or co-curricular activities, students should see their coach or activity facilitator. Only when a satisfactory resolution of a concern has not been reached by the student should a parent contact the teacher, and if need be, the Department Head, the Director of Student Services (Senior School) or Assistant Head (JS) or Head of Junior School/Senior School, Deputy Head Teaching and Learning and lastly, the Head of School.

Student growth and development are an ongoing process that extends over years. In supporting student growth, collaboration and mutual respect are necessary between parents and teachers. There may be times when your child makes a poor decision, or scores low marks, and you may think it necessary to rescue your child. It is important to remember that learning from mistakes is part of healthy growth. We encourage positive and constructive parent input and ask that parents allow their child to learn the importance of self-advocacy.

To further our best practices for home and school, Ashbury College outlines its expectations of students according to the following principles:

- establish honest, open and respectful communication;
- see that the child's needs and parental expectations realistically match the mission, core values, philosophy and programs of the school;
- help to increase student responsibility, independence and accountability; acknowledge teachers' integrity and professionalism;
- seek to understand the school's mandate to do what is best for the full school community; honour the school mission, core values, policies and procedures.

More specifically, parents/guardians will endeavour to:

- support positive learning attitudes and habits at home;
- set high, but realistic, expectations for their child's learning and behaviour;
- advocate for students to do their own homework;
- ensure student wellness, neatness and proper school dress;
- comply with school regulations for arrival time and class attendance;
- promptly advise the school of their child's absence or late arrival;
- adhere to the school vacation schedule and refrain from seeking extensions;
- inform the Head of Junior School or Assistant Head of unavoidable, planned absences;
- help their child become independent by encouraging him/her to see a subject teacher, Form teacher, when there is a problem;
- address unresolved concerns by following the correct communication path: Department Head, the Director of Student Services (Senior School) or Assistant Head (JS) or Head of Junior School/Senior School, Deputy Head Teaching and Learning and lastly, the Head of School;
- listen to both the student and the teacher to fully understand any concern;
- share important personal information that the school may need to best serve the student and the learning community (medical conditions, psychoeducational assessments);
- acknowledge the integrity of school decisions made on a well-informed basis;
- be mindful of the frequency, length and tone of emails addressed to Ashbury faculty and staff and arrange to meet with the appropriate person on any sensitive issues.

For more information on the Parent Partnership Plan, including homework and conflict resolution tips, please visit the parent portal on the school website.

TIPS ON HOW TO BEST SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

To help your child succeed at school, consider some of the following ideas.

Junior School

- Read to and with your elementary school child each night;
- Read and sign the student agenda daily;
- Take advantage of no homework days by playing strategy games (chess, Scrabble, checkers, memory, crosswords, Boggle) and by engaging in creative activities (music, drawing, writing, painting, dancing and building);
- Ask your child to choose a class buddy whom s/he can email or call for clarification of homework;
- Help your child with the organization of their work area;
- Set aside a quiet (free from MSN, Facebook...), clean, uncluttered, well-lit area for study at the same time each night. Routine and self-discipline are crucial to a child's success;
- Be sure that your child has all the necessary supplies before starting homework (ruler, pen, pencil, paper, dictionary, printer, internet...). Children will easily lose their focus if they need to look regularly for materials;
- Post a calendar near desk and ask your child to write down all tests, assignments and projects;
- Before your child starts homework, ask him/her to explain what needs to be done. Then allow him/her to work alone. Encourage independent problem-solving, critical thinking and self-directed learning. Independent learners tend to succeed better on tests, exams and in-class projects than learners who are frequently assisted by their parents;
- For larger assignments, help your child break the work down into manageable sections. Use an egg timer to help with pace. (For example a Grade 6 student might work for 30 minutes, take a 10-minute break, work for another 30 minutes, take a 10-minute break...);
- Ensure all social networking occurs outside of homework time.

Junior School and Senior School

- Set high, but reasonable, academic and behavioural expectations for your child;
- Read the weekly electronic school email and attend parent-teacher interviews and orientation evenings;
- Plan to cook and eat together as a family and engage in conversation about your child's day at school;
- Show interest in what s/he has learnt and focus less on marks. Make it known that you will love your child regardless of his/her results;
- Don't pay or give gifts for high marks; discuss instead what led to your child's success. Likewise, don't punish your child for low marks;
- Provide opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities and show your support;
- Reduce the amount of time spent in front of the television, on the phone, on the computer and playing video games;
- Support 100% attendance at school. Children who struggle academically often have parents who take them on extended vacations. It's impossible for teachers and students to adequately make up missed class time; there's no substitute for meaningful class discussion, in-class learning strategies and group work;
- Help your child set 2 to 3 academic and, if necessary, behavioural goals for each term. Post them in a visible spot in the house and check regularly with your child to see if s/he is meeting them;
- Be sure to separate social networking from homework. Connecting with friends via the phone, Facebook, MSN, MySpace may be used as breaks from homework;
- If your child finds his/her teacher "mean", listen to his/her concerns. But it is important not to criticize the teacher or the school in front of your child. Your first response might be to explain how teachers with high standards can be beneficial to your child's learning. Parents who encourage children to rise to the challenge of demanding teachers are actually ensuring that those children will develop and refine their own talents. Blaming teachers for a child's poor performance, or negative attitude, rarely serves a useful function. Indeed, it increases his/her risk of academic failure by disguising the source of the problem. This is a poor recipe for success at Ashbury, and is very poor preparation for success as an eventual employee. Demanding bosses are grateful to demanding teachers.

Tutoring (Junior School and Senior School)

- Before hiring a tutor, please ensure that your child has taken advantage of extra help sessions offered by his/her teachers;
- If you feel your child requires the extra support of a tutor, please get the advice of his/her teachers before making arrangements with a tutor;
- The role of a tutor is to reinforce concepts that have already been taught in class. Please note that students who rely heavily on tutors tend to lack resilience and initiative. Tutors should by no means do the homework for a student. We also recommend regular communication between the teacher and the tutor.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict can arise in a wide range of circumstances between students and students, teachers and students, teachers and administrators, teachers and parents. It does not always have to be negative; it can help to promote a better understanding of other people's roles, lead to solving problems that have been unresolved in the past, and create more open communication for future interaction.

The following tips aim to help resolve conflict in a positive and constructive way:

- Take the time to listen to the other person's concerns before voicing your own;
- Show you are listening by politely asking questions and by acknowledging his/her feelings;
- Restate the facts that have been presented before you share your perspective;

- Focus on the concern, not on the person raising the concern;
- Formulate your thoughts using “I”;
- Avoid blaming the person for the problem;
- Recognize that most problems stem from a miscommunication between two people, not just one person;
- As a joint problem solver, focus objectively on what can be done, rather than on what was done;
- Continue to build the relationship once the conflict has been resolved.

