



Building parent-school partnerships

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It's a (Christmas) WRAP!

How will you close up the school year and set the scene to make next year your child's best year ever?

It's that time of year again! The school year is almost over. The Christmas holidays are just around the corner.

"Where did the last twelve months go?" That's the adult viewpoint. Kids think, "What took so long?" Different ages, different perspectives.

Kids generally want to plunge into holidays, leaving schoolwork, timetables and teachers behind. That's only natural.

But before they get too far into holiday mode, consider how you'll round out the year, and bring it to a close. If your child is finishing primary or secondary school then there will be a graduation ceremony that signals the end of one phase of their school lives.

The greater importance given to school graduation ceremonies over the last few decades is recognition of the human need to bring closure to one stage of life, and prepare for the next.

Kids of all ages benefit from parental recognition of their achievements and successes as it sets the stage for the coming school year.

Here are a few ideas to help you close off the old year to prepare for the year ahead:

1 Discuss the highlights and the lowlights of the year:

Ask kids to name their highlights, favourite times or most memorable moments of the year just gone. Use age appropriate language and questions that will open them up, rather than shut them down. At the year's end I would ask my school-aged kids to rate the year from 1 to 5, and to identify their best memory, their favourite subject and something new that they encountered. These questions worked for me, but each parent needs to find their own approach.

2 Celebrate improvement and success:

Identify one or two areas where they excelled, improved or overcame some challenges. Broaden the focus away from just academic performance and recognise achievement in social, sport or arts areas. It's important for kids who struggle academically to understand that you value success in a variety of areas.

3 Show appreciation:

Consider how they can show appreciation to teachers, coaches or other people who may have assisted them during the year. Not only is it good manners to show gratitude, but some kids need reminding that other people contribute to their achievements.

4 Look forward

It maybe beneficial to give your kids a chance to vent about some aspect of the year that they didn't like, found difficult or challenging. Try to limit this type of discussion so that it doesn't end in a whinge session and point them toward a better future next year.

5 Now relax

It's time for them to set the previous school year aside, put their feet up and chill out over the school break. Remember, if the previous year wasn't one of your child's best, the five to six week break gives him or her a chance to make a fresh start next year.

So it's a wrap! The slate has been wiped clean. Enjoy the break and see you next year!

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