

The Principal's Corner

Student-led Conferences let Scholars take the Lead

Most of us have been to a parent-teacher conference where the teacher and parents sit at a small table and look at student work, while the kid squirms off to the side. Sometimes the adults talk about the kid like he or she isn't even there.

This year, TOPA elementary schools are trying something that has been gaining momentum in the educational community for the last few years – student-led conferences. On March 21 and 22, Sienna Hills will have a half-day schedule to allow families to meet with teachers for conferences where the scholars take the lead.

According to an article in Education World, “the advantages, say most teachers who have participated in student-led conferences, outweigh the downside. Student accountability is mentioned again and again by educators as a plus for student-led conferences. Another plus is the way even a struggling student can produce something positive for a conference, an art project or an essay, perhaps, that wouldn't show up in a report card grade. Overall, talks with educators indicate, student-led conferences are a growing trend.”¹

Each grade level at Sienna Hills will be using a different format and schedule, to accommodate the differing capacities of kids at different ages. You will be getting additional details from your child's teacher as the date gets closer.

We suggest that you use the conference as an opening to find out how your child perceives school and what they do here, and take advantage of the knowledge to have more meaningful conversations in the future about their lives.



Save the Date – March 24, 10-12

Spartan-style, with stations

Registration starts 9:30

Bounce houses, slides,
food, music, and fun!

Proceeds benefit Water for Life!

Hosted by TOPA Sienna Hills

More details to come.



¹ Cromwell, S. (2015). Student-led conferences: A growing trend. Education World. http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin112.shtml

How Praise Can Create Pain

Dr. Charles Fay, Love & Logic Blog, 11/29/17

“Do you have any questions or thoughts?” I asked the audience.

She was quick to answer, “I’m trying to be positive...but it seems like every time he does something good...and I praise him...the wheels fall off of his behavior. He gets irritable, disrespectful, and sometimes even defiant.”

Quickly scanning the group of around one hundred parents and educators, I noticed about a quarter nodding their heads in agreement. One parent commented, “It’s like my daughter can’t handle anything going well. She sabotages things as soon as I say something like, ‘Great job.’”

Why do so many adults, from so many varied walks of life, say the same thing about praise? “It backfires with a lot of kids.”

Before we pursue this puzzle, perhaps wisdom dictates that we define what we’re really talking about when we use the term “praise.” According to the dictionary, “Praise” means, “to express a favorable judgment of: commend.” Examples from daily life include:

- Super job!
- You are so bright.
- Way to go!
- I’m so proud of you.
- Awesome!



Two Types of Praise

Spontaneous

This type comes from sincere excitement over something a child has done. There’s no ulterior motive. It happens naturally. Most of the time, I encourage people to relax and allow this type of praise to happen. If it’s clear that it makes a child uncomfortable, we can always curb it a bit. Otherwise...don’t worry...be happy.

Intentional

This type is done by good-hearted people for the express purpose of shaping behavior. The goal is to “catch the child doing something good and rewarding it with praise.” Because many children have finely tuned intentionality detectors, this type is the most likely to backfire.

An Alternative: Notice and Describe

Have you ever read an article that was all about problems but provided no solutions? I do my best to avoid writing those. Before we look at why intentional praise works poorly with many youth, how about an alternative that’s far more effective with many youth?

Notice and describe the behavior without judging it.

- I noticed that you finished the assignment even though it was challenging.
- You did all of your chores without being reminded. How does that feel?
- I noticed that you kept your cool when those kids were teasing you. What was that like for you?
- I noticed that you spent a lot of time today helping your little brother.
- You completed nine out of ten correctly. I imagine that feels really good.

Some Problems with Intentional Praise

Self-Concept Conflict

Children who feel poorly about themselves usually feel extremely uncomfortable when praised. On a subconscious level they react, “This doesn’t match up. I’m not that great, and I don’t do great things. In fact, I can probably think of a million examples of why this person is wrong about me.”

For many children, praise actually triggers a myriad of negative self-images, all intended to confirm the child’s negative view of self. While no positive, rational person would compel a child to construct a dirty laundry list of all of their perceived failures, this often occurs when a hurting child hears something like, “That’s awesome!” The resulting conflict and anxiety contributes to the difficult behaviors following our attempts to be positive.

Zero-Sum Orientation

Many highly controlling kids have a real problem with other people being happy about their behavior. One psychological characteristic of these kids (and adults) is a zero-sum orientation. In their head, only one person can win: "If my parent or teacher is happy about my behavior, I must be unhappy about it."

These are the kids who are also wondering, "What do you want from me?" When they experience praise, they feel a strong need to prove that any efforts to manipulate (even if this is not intended by the adult) will not work.

The Pedestal is Slippery

I suffer from this one. When praised, I often find myself feeling a bit panicked. My mind begins to race, "What if I can't maintain this? What if I fail? What if I disappoint these people who think I'm so great?"

As a child, I learned how to avoid these feelings: Don't try so hard. Be mediocre. Be a bit resistant. Don't give adults much to be excited about. When they try to be positive, be a little more negative.

Fortunately, the development of Love and Logic helped my parents realize that all of their loving attempts at praise were actually making things worse. Things began to change when they began to consistently send two messages through their words and actions:

**We love you unconditionally.
You don't have to earn our love, and you can't lose it.
You get to decide how you feel about your accomplishments.
We'll just be happy for you.**



Parenting with Love and Logic®

In this entertaining, fun-filled presentation, Jim and Charles will provide tips and techniques for taking the exhaustion out of parenting little kids. Two sessions available - attend the April 21 morning session, afternoon session, or both!

\$30.00 – Saturday, April 21, 2018 – Doubletree Hilton Phoenix North – www.loveandlogic.com

Easy Beef Stroganoff

*This was one of my mother's go-to comfort recipes for cold weather. I still it for my family. **Hugh Thompson***

4 servings -- 45 minute cook & prep time

Ingredients

- 1/8 cup chopped onion
- 1 tsp butter or margerine
- ¼ tsp garlic powder
- 1 lb. lean ground beef, browned and drained
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- ¾ cup milk
- 4 oz. cream cheese
- 1 package wide egg noodles, cooked

Instructions

1. In large saucepan, sautee onion in butter until browned, then add garlic powder. Set aside.
2. Brown ground beef, drain, and then add onions.
3. Add soup and milk. Simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Serve on top of cooked noodles with some black pepper to taste.



Sautee in some mushrooms in step 1 for an added treat!

It Is STILL That Time of Year: Cold & Flu Season

asalgado@topamail.com

Cold and Flu season has been running rampant at Sienna Hills, and we want to make sure that everybody is happy and healthy. The following tips can be used to help prevent spreading germs

1. Avoid close contact. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
2. Stay home when you are sick (REMINDER: Scholars must be fever free without the assistance of anti-febrile medications for 24 hours before returning to school)
3. Cover your mouth and nose.
4. Clean your hands.
5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
6. Practice other good health habits.

If your scholar is sick, please remember to call the attendance line at [623-444-9934](tel:623-444-9934) (press 1) or email the attendance line attendancesiennahills@topamail.com

Upcoming Events in February and Beyond

- February 1 – McTeacher Night, Watson Road McDonalds, 5-7 pm. A portion of sales will be donated to Sienna Hills.
- February 8 – Class Photos taken in morning.
- February 8 – Jamba Juice Thirsty Thursday - \$3 each, orders due by Wednesday at 9 am.
- February 13 – Valentine-inspired T-Shirt Day - \$1, sponsored by the Ambassadors
- February 15 – Ambassador’s Club Popcorn for Afternoon Snack – \$1 per bag. Orders due by 9:00. Pre-order for the rest of the year for \$5.
- February 19 – Presidents’ Day – NO SCHOOL.
- February 22 – TOPA T-shirt day: Kudos, Argonaut Adventure Day, Birthday celebrations for February.
- February 28 – Box Tops for Education – please send contributions to your homeroom teacher. In 2017 we received over \$600!
- March 1 – Happy Birthday Dr. Seuss! Wear a Dr. Seuss-themed T-shirt - \$1, sponsored by the Ambassadors
- March 5-8 – Scholastic Book Fair
- March 12-15 – Spring Break
- March 21-22 – Conference Half Days
- March 24 – Family Fun Run



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Office Hours: M-Th. 7AM-5PM



IB Learner Profile Student Recognition January 2018

L to R: Hannah Galloway (4); Charles Jones (3); Kyle
Tayazime (2) Avery Morris (1)

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