

You Talk Too Much...Seriously

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I have witnessed and worked with the most loving teachers that care deeply for the kids and their families but... they talk non-stop! How do you politely tell Miss. Jabber-jaws to shut up. This might sound harsh but kids need to talk and more importantly, kids need to be heard. This requires teachers to listen.

Think back to a time when someone listened to you. Maybe it was your mom or grandmother. You knew they were listening so you started giving all the good details. This is how the children in your classroom will respond once they know you want to hear what they have to say.

Many people are frustrated because they don't have anyone to listen to them. It might be their spouse or boss but they feel whatever they have to say is of no value. Many kids hear phrases like; "Not right now.", "Can't you see I'm busy?", "Later.", "Don't bother me, this is important." Now is the time to start listening to our children. So here is a question I have for you to consider, "Do you talk to children or do you talk with children?" Many children have adults who want to give them advice and teach them but not listen to their opinions and feelings. Our kids might figure out solutions to many things if they could talk about their issues. It's like thinking out loud.

Children will also turn to dramatic behavior in order to be heard. Consider your classroom of kids. I know we are very busy trying to accomplish everything in the curriculum on a limited amount of time, but what if you did one thing less and allowed space in your schedule for kids to talk more. I wonder if the behaviors would be more respectful and friendly because the teacher is not rushed and genuinely wants to hear what children have to say.

Our work with kids is done through the relationships we build not the classrooms we've painted and decorated. We do need places to meet and study the Bible, but meeting places are not more important than the relationships. Try these ideas for building relationships through listening:

- Don't interrupt
- Repeat back phrases
- Eye Contact
- Listen for their feelings

A good couple of follow-up ideas might include: a card in the mail, text a Bible verse, or speak encouragement to them outside the classroom. These actions show you were listening.

What are some ways you promote conversations with kids?

