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Setting, question key to asking “How was school today?”

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It’s natural for teen-agers to explore their independence and push their parents away, but that makes it difficult when parents want to ask about their teen’s day.

Sure enough, if parents ask, “How was school today?” they’re likely to hear, “Fine” or “Good” and not much else. So how does a parent let their teen know they are interested in hearing what they’re working on in school and how things are going and do it in such a way that they get more than a one-word response?

First things first: consider the setting. Often, teen-agers are more comfortable talking when they’re doing something else. Try drawing them out when you’re together working in the yard or shooting hoops, driving them to practice or picking them up from an event.

Then, change up the “How was school today” question with some of these questions:

1. What went well with your presentation?
2. Rather than ask about entire school day, focus on a single class, “How is geometry going; are you learning?”
3. What made you laugh today?
4. What feedback did coach give you at practice?
5. What’s your homework load look like tonight?
6. Which of your teachers is engaging?
7. You often talk about your 6th period teacher; what about your 2nd period teacher?
8. What feedback did you get from your teacher on that project?
9. What was one thing that stood out for you today?
10. What was discussed that you agreed with or disagreed with?
11. What was the last conversation you had with a teacher?
12. Did anything exciting happen at lunch?

It’s also helpful to:

- Have conversations about school be a regular feature of family dinnertime.
- Keep up with the information shared by your school and school district.
- Ask how your teen’s best friend is doing; it’s a good ice breaker.

There’s no guarantee that these approaches will transform your teen into a chatterbox, but they’re sure to get you more than a perfunctory “Fine” when you ask about their day.