



# NURTURING IN EDUCATION

Parents have children because they want to nurture. Teachers teach because they want to nurture. People who work at a school, want to nurture.

Nurturing begins with the basics. Environmental provisions like shelter, sanitation, food and medical care should go without saying – mandatory rather than ‘nurturing’, and there are many people who work tirelessly to reach these goals. Education in particular is the perfect opportunity to build on those basic human needs and also address the more emotional aspects of well-being. It is a place that our children spend a significant amount of time and academic learning is made possible by not only addressing intellect but social-emotional development too.



Consider your child’s day. Who do they encounter? Not just their teacher for sure. There may be a security guard or someone screening for entry, a secretary and perhaps a gardener as they make their way to a gathering of friends with a dedicated teacher and a principle holding

everyone together.

Does the person ensuring your child’s safety receive a friendly greeting? The screener a polite acknowledgement? How about that hero who keeps the school up and running behind the scenes and fields endless phone calls a day? And the ground staff beautifying our places of learning? Here I would like to suggest that an atmosphere of nurturing is expected between a teacher and the children, but that teachers are not the only contributors to your child’s care at school. As such, everyone at the school deserves as much respect and understanding of the role they play in the lives of our youngsters. For our children to mature in their own way, they should also be taught the value of all relationships around them and be encouraged to foster them.

Positive relationships are central to both learning and well-being. Connections do not exist in a void and that means that parents shoulder some responsibility towards fostering a supportive environment around their children. At the heart of any nurturing is communication. What is needed, what is offered, what is/ isn’t effective, what to change and how to get there together. Nurturing requires a massive amount of patience and it’s not unusual to find parents only too happy to deliver their children to school- and on the flip side for teachers to be only too delighted at the end of the school day. Teachers love holidays and parents love the first day back and so it goes. Not because parents or teachers dislike the children, but simply because nurturing is exhausting. That is why it takes a village.



It can't always be so, but where possible, parents select particular schools because they reflect the values of a family. Because they are considered safe and the staff trustworthy. Because a parent is satisfied with the learning opportunities and experiences provided. Similarly, a school needs to live up to the expectations of the parents who have entrusted their treasures into the care of the establishment, encouraging social-emotional well-being, positive relationships and academic development.



An illustration of a familiar example at school: There may be a particular concern, either at home or school, both parties (parent and teacher) may be defensive however both have the child's best interests at heart. Children, teachers and parents are fallible human beings and mistakes will be made and disagreements will be had. If a relationship has been fostered between caregivers and trust has been earned, intentions are transparent and more attention can be given to the situation at hand and in a nurturing way, the concerns can be addressed. Similarly, the child has been shown a healthy, cooperative approach to problem solving- even if parties disagree, as long as it is done respectfully and with the child's well-being in mind.

**Generally speaking, academics agree that the process of nurturing children both at home and at school, consists of numerous principles:**

- ◆ Children's learning is understood developmentally, in other words realistic attainable goals for the individual and different children have different learning styles.

- ◆ A safe and consistent place that is kind, tolerant and inquisitive is necessary for learning.
- ◆ Well-being of the child is paramount, and self-esteem should be a priority.
- ◆ Communication is vital and everything possible should happen to encourage reciprocal conversations between parents, staff and children.
- ◆ *All behaviour is communication* and all parties, while instilling school and home values, should intentionally consider the reasons that may cause a particular behaviour.
- ◆ Any transition in a child's life is tough and often involves relationships changing too. Support and sensitivity ensure a safe, stimulating environment.

In discussing what makes for a nurturing environment, concern is primarily placed on what is best for the child, without considering that nurturing people need as much care in order to be able to pass it on. Salaries are not the nurturing I am referring to. Everyone needs respect, validation, encouragement, and support. To create a nurturing environment in education, it holds true that nurturing should be a priority all round, from each relationship, communication, and interaction, be it teacher to child, child to child or any staff members to each other.

Communication and respect are key to nurturing our children to reach their potentials as individuals, while learning to nurture in return.

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