

REPORT CARDS WITHOUT MARKS!

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It was a pleasant surprise to receive the first report card of our child from from Centre for Learning (CFL). First of all it did not have any Marks. It was like a letter - warm and affectionate letter from our daughter's teachers. It was, not a single letter but, a bunch of narratives from all the concerned teachers. For us, it was very new because both our daughters were till then studying in a typical government school in our village.

We, as a family, enjoyed reading these letters. It had different sections. What we liked most is the way it described our daughters. It gave all that we knew about them and to our excitement it also gave us those aspects of our children that we did not know. It also gave us such a lot of insights on their behavior, thinking, moods and living.

The structure – to understand and develop

The structure of the report is very interesting. First there is the coordinators report which has two parts. The first part is about the whole class, the group of students. It gives us a general sense of what this group went through this year. *"The Parijathas year tends to be one of the most structured in the child's life at CFL"* It moves forward saying that the academic subjects and the IGCSE exams take large chunk of the time giving very less time for other things in school. It gives a roundup of what the academic program was and in a gist gives us what non-academic experience of the group was. It gives us a feeling of how the group has gelled, what they did well, what they neglected or when *"they were tired of each other"*. It gives us very minute details of the group dynamics and feelings. The report has this to say about the group dynamics -- *"It came*

as a surprise for me that even at such young age many of them feel that certain movements in life like hurt and sorrow are inevitable and there is nothing much that can be done about it and discussing is a waste of time."

The second part of the coordinators' report speaks about our individual child in a broader sense. *"she is a very thoughtful participant in dialogue classes and often has a very keen observation to share"....."theatre is something she can seriously consider perusing"*

It finishes with this paragraph *"her major challenge is to shrug off the sense of low-esteem and move on to really putting a lot of energy to her learning in the years to come. I look forward to having her as a senior school student and interacting with her for 3 more years"*

After this we have reports of each teacher who has engaged with the child. In this report there are two parts. The first part gives us what the curriculum was, how it was dealt and what text and resources were used. The second part gives a feeling of how the child has done in that subject. It gives very specific inputs like, *"cheerful and quite she has been an involved participant in the class.....i wish she was more pro-active about asking for help whenever she needed it"* *"Her ideas are original but, not always clear."* It is very systematically written with different side headings like work style, ideas and content, choice of words and fluency and examination preparation. On the work style the sentence, *"I also feel her weekends need more structuring and I am not sure if she is organizing her time well to work. She needs to plan better before writing"*

made us, think, relook and change the way we spent our weekends.

When it comes to helping the child the report is very specific *".... I think we need to help her acquire better study skills. Simple points such as asking for clarification, making notes for her own understanding, reviewing for memory I don't feel she has been very proactive in these areas..... Very clearly she has the ability to work on these."* It can also capture very complex dynamics like *"... her conceptual grasp as well as her understanding of the skills required in the course has steadily grown over the months I would say there is a disparity between her participation in class and her written work. The former is very minimal while the latter is quite rich and sophisticated in terms of both content and analysis. "*

The report concludes thus - *"She seems to have a relatively peaceful year with no major emotional ups and down. It was very heartening to see her certainty about returning to school in spite of confusion amongst her classmates"*

Dialogue – the prime mover

We have never felt that the report is just a printed report judging our child. It is child friendly and the entire effort is to understand the child and help her. There are a whole lot of meetings and dialogue that happen pre and post

this report meeting. The report is discussed with the students, then it is discussed in detail with the parents and in CFL when they say parents it is both the parents! Later there is an informal chat with each teacher. Every month there is a parent teacher meeting which is the only compulsory thing in CFL. it does not grade the child it just helps us to understand the child and see what all of us together can do to help child grow!

Initially sometimes we used to ponder if there is a need for such detailed and complex report. But after 8 years of this process with both our children in CFL, we feel that this was the best part of our children's education. It was a process of education more for us than for the children. It helped us immensely to understand our children. It gives you clear directions in the process of bringing up your children. It helps you to observe your child very keenly from different angles. It gives you a perspective to education. It makes you think and stops you from jumping in to conclusions. It helps you to build a culture of dialogue, a process of Democracy at the most fundamental institution – the family!

We felt that the report card of CFL was a way to celebrate a person. Hence, we always look forward for our children's report.

NB: All the sentences in italics are from the report of our daughter, from CFL.

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