

## Talking to your child about their learning

At the 16th International Conference on Thinking in Wellington we gained some good ideas from Ron Ritchhart who is a researcher from Harvard Universities Graduate School of Education.

### Suggestions from Ron Ritchhart

- Focus on the learning over work. Take a moment to ask your child what the purpose of each assignment is, what do they think their teacher wants them to learn and get better at as a result. Then monitor the learning, not the work.
- Ask your child, “What questions did you ask today?” Our questions drive us as learners.
- Challenge but don’t rescue. We learn a lot from making mistakes, taking risks to try new things. When your child encounters difficulties with homework, don’t jump in to solve the problem and rescue him/her. Instead, ask questions that will help him/her to think through the problem, identify, and choose a course of action for moving forward.
- Develop a growth mindset. A belief that intelligence and ability grow and develop over time, as opposed to something that is fixed and set. Develop this growth mindset in your child by focusing your praise on progress, learning, and effort (You really worked hard on this and have learned a lot. You did a great job of developing a plan and following it through. You’ve really developed as a musician.), as opposed to ability (You’re so clever. Look how smart you are; you did that so fast.)
- Name and notice thinking. Use the language of thinking to name and notice your child is using and thus make it more visible. This is especially important when praising and give feedback: That’s an interesting theory. I like how you have used what you already know to make connections. That’s a perspective I hadn’t thought about.
- Make your own thinking visible. The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky said, “Children grow into the intellectual life around them.” You are a model for your child of what it means to be a thinker and learner. Model your own interests, passions, curiosity, reflection, learning, and thinking for your child. Make your own thinking visible to them as a model.
- What makes you say that? This simple question is very powerful for both parents and teachers to use. “What makes you say that?”, in a curious and nonjudgmental tone after someone has given a response, we are able to get a window into the thinking behind that person’s initial response. The reason behind the response often tells us much more than the response itself.