

PARENTING SEMINAR

Date of Presentation: November 21, 2018_

Venue: Chevannes Basic School

Facilitators: Sheila Barrett, Clare Blake, Andrea Todd

Title: How We Learn to be Parents

Theme: *"Children are not like roses; they do not unfold unaided to reveal their beauty."*

PREPARATION

No additional preparation was done as the request was for a similar workshop to the one done the previous week at Caenwood, Ministry of Education. The objectives and format therefore would remain the same. Adequate copies of handouts were in hand as we had prepared for more than the number that had attended the previous workshop.

Remarks

On arrival it was realized (i) the workshop would be held outside in the yard and not in a classroom
(ii) it was the 1st item on the agenda of what was their usual PTA meeting

No. in attendance: Total - 45 42 women 3 men

Welcome -The Team was welcomed and introduced by the Principal, Mrs. Caroline Brown

Introductory Remarks (Facilitator - Mrs. Clare Blake)

During the Introductory Remarks children were running up and down and between ourselves and the participants. At times individual participants had to deal with minor problems affecting their children including one young man who in running fell and in his embarrassment was attempting to leave the school compound. This created a distraction and two of the participants had to leave the gathering to see to his security. However despite the distractions Mrs. Blake was undaunted and continued to give participants an overview of what we were hoping to achieve and what would be required of them.



Activity 1: Understanding More about Our Attitudes to Parenting (Facilitator - Andrea Todd).

At the previous workshop participants had already engaged in exercises that had 'broken the ice' and were comfortable with each other and ready to engage with us. Looking at the faces of some of the participants at this workshop it was clear that they were not enthused and ready to engage with us. Some looked downright suspicious of us and our intentions. A warm-up exercise would have been a great help given the circumstances, but we were unprepared. However, given the easy and engaging style of Mrs. Todd she was soon able to get the parents to respond and engage in the activity prescribed for this first session.



In order to have the different groups, that indicated a preference for the four different stances under the sign **"Being a good parent is mostly doing what comes naturally"**, to be within hearing distance of each other, two groups had to have one of their member hold their signs while the other signs were on the outside walls of a classroom.



Those parents who felt that parenting came naturally pointed out that most parents do it on their own as there was nobody to teach them parenting skills. The spokesperson for the group shared that her mother raised her and her other siblings on her own; nobody showed her and in fact everybody does it differently. Those who disagreed or doubted the statement felt that parenting skills were learnt as they had to instill values in their children and teach them to love each other. As one parent put it, if parenting was natural there would be many supermoms in the world



Activity 2: Memory Lane

Participants were divided into 3 groups based on numbered cards that had been pre-prepared, with each facilitator taking her group to a different section in the yard. One group had to change position halfway during the session as they were now being pelted by the rays of the sun.

Many parents seemed very reluctant to share of their early childhood experiences but there were one or two in each group that readily shared and broke the ice. Facilitators by their encouraging and friendly attitude were able to break down whatever barriers remained and the end result was a lively discussion that had to be curtailed in the interest of time.

Participants shared experiences that clearly affected them deeply and now seemed happy for the opportunity to share and 'get it off their chests'. One parent shared that she was sent to live with her grandmother in the country and became a 'Cinderella' figure, as she had to do all the work in the house while others did nothing. Another shared that she lived with her mother but was never 'mothered'. Her mother did not care if she went to school or not and so she taught herself to read and write with the help of her friends. It was not until she was 11 that she went to school and rightly feels that she would have been able to do better for herself financially today if she had had a better opportunity at schooling.

A father shared that he deliberately missed outings because he knew that his mother could not afford it. This helped him to plan and save for his son so that he didn't have to struggle like his mother. Another parent said that she got in a fight at seven years old because another girl took away her chair. Her mother in response beat her without listening to her side. She remained angry with her mother and hated the girl right through to adulthood when she let go of the anger and learnt to forgive. She continued to share that her mom did not know how to love and broke down in tears. The facilitator intervened and allowed her to compose herself before allowing her to continue. Parents felt comfortable sharing and so the young lady who broke down in tears soon became happy again.



Activity 3: Tips on Parenting (Facilitator - Sheila Barrett)

For this activity participants had to retreat to an area next to the entrance gate where there was some shade under a tree.

A similar format to that done at the previous workshop was used with the exception that the Parenting Self-Test was given at the end of this session.



PRESENTATION

The President of the Parent Teachers Association, Mrs. Fredrica Beckford-McLean along with parent - Yaneak Bryan made presentations of gifts to each facilitator and expressed their appreciation.

EVALUATION

No formal evaluation instrument was prepared but this time it was an oversight. However, it is felt that it would not have been done effectively as the President of the P.T.A. was anxious to go on to the other items that they had originally prepared for the meeting and some parents were already leaving.

Facilitators however were asked to formulate three questions based on the presentations which were asked of the participants for prizes. Correct responses came readily without any prompting.

One parent who had shared the problems that she was having with her four year old daughter in the group session sought the advice of her group facilitator after the workshop. Her daughter was born at a hospital in Kingston with a deformity of the shoulder. The irregularity was not recognized by the Hospital at first but the mother persisted in insisting that something was wrong and she was eventually referred to another hospital in October where the child was diagnosed with a Sprengel shoulder. Her next appointment is in July 2019 when a decision will be made whether to operate or not. The mother is distressed at the long wait and is convinced that the child's condition is as a result of careless handling at birth.

Clare Blake knows the Chief Orthopaedic Surgeon, to whom the child was referred at the Hospital, very well, and has offered to speak with him in an attempt to appease the mother's fears and to see if an earlier date is possible.

The President of the P.T.A. requested a printed copy of the points made in the last session on effective parenting so that it could be circulated to parents. This was subsequently prepared by Sheila Barrett and emailed to her.