28 Ways to Ask Your Teens ‘How Was School Today?’ Without Asking Them ‘How Was School Today?’

By liZ Evans

Last week, I posted 25 ways to ask your kids “So how was school today?” without asking them “So how was school today?” — and the questions came from a list that I made to ask my own children, who are in elementary school.

But naturally, all of those questions are geared toward elementary-school-aged kids, and I started to consider... if I think it’s hard for me to get school stories from my 10-year-old boy now, what is it going to be like five years from now?!

And then I remembered that I know what it’s going to be like. I taught either junior high or high school for almost a decade, and I get that communication with that age group is an art. BUT when you get dialogue, engaged dialogue, with a teen, it’s never disappointing. It’s guaranteed to be interesting; sometimes it can be very enlightening; and it’s ALWAYS worth the work. ALWAYS.

So tonight, my husband (who also teaches high school) and I sat down and made a list of 28 ways to ask your teens “How was school today?” without asking them “How was school today?”, in an effort to get some sort of engaged, interesting dialogue... even if it only lasts in that brief time when they’re not texting friends.

28 Ways To Ask Your Teens ‘How Was School Today?’ Without Asking Them ‘How Was School Today?’

1. Where in the school do you hang out the most? (Like a particular hall, classroom, parking lot, etc.) Where in the school do you never hang out?
2. What would your school be better with? What would your school be better without?
3. If you were a teacher, what class would you teach? Which class would be the worst to teach? Why?
4. What was the coolest (saddest, funniest, scariest) thing that you saw today?
5. Tell me one thing that you learned today.
6. If your day at school today was a movie, what movie would it be?
7. Besides walking to their next classes, what else do people do in the halls in between classes?
8. Who do you think you could be nicer to?
9. Which is your easiest class? Which is your hardest class? OR Which class are you learning the most in? Which class are you learning the least in?
10. If they played music in the halls at school, what would everyone want them to play over the loudspeaker?
11. If you could read minds, which teacher’s mind would you read? Which classmate’s mind would you read? Whose mind would you NOT want to read?
12. If today had a theme song, what would it be?
13. Which class has your favorite group of students in it? Which class has the worst group of students?
14. What do you think you should do more of at school? What do you think you should do less of?
15. What are the top three (or five) things that you hear people say in the halls?
16. What do you think the most important part of school is?
17. Tell me one question that you had today, even if it wasn’t answered... actually, especially if it wasn’t answered...
18. Which class has the most cute boys/girls in it?
19. If an alien spaceship landed at your school, who would you like them to beam aboard and take back to their home planet?
20. Who did you help today? Who helped you today?
21. If you could be invisible for the day at school, what would you do?
22. What part of the day do you look forward to? What part of the day do you dread?
23. What would you change about school lunch?
24. Which classmate is most likely to be arrested, made president, become a millionaire, be in movies, let loose a flock of wild chickens in the library, etc.?
25. If you had to go to only one class every day, which class would it be?
26. Tell me one thing you read at school today.
27. If your day at school was an emoticon, which one would it be?
28. What do you think your teachers talked about in the faculty room today after school?

*****

**NOTE:** I don’t have teenagers of my own, but I’ve worked with my fair share of them — and one thing that I’ve found is that when you want them to open up, just sitting them down and asking questions isn’t really effective. BUT, if you, say, trap them in the car... and talk to them while you are driving... and they don’t have to make eye contact... they are more willing to offer up more information or ask more questions.

This also happens while you are working with them on things like making dinner, folding laundry, rearranging furniture, etc. You can casually talk and ask questions without making them feel like you are grilling them.

When I taught school, sometimes I would make up work project jobs to do with students who I was worried about, just so that we could have some heart-to-hearts while scrubbing desks or cleaning out closets. It sounds lame, but I’m telling you, it works.

Good luck with those teens, and happy conversing!

*This post originally appeared on Simple Simon and Company.*