

## **Challenges of being in CFL (as an adult)**

Hello,

I'm Navneeth and I would like to share with you some of the challenges that the adult community- parents and teachers - faces in our joint collaboration of working together.

Here, at CFL, we place great emphasis on the relationship between teachers and parents.

This stems from the understanding that we – the adults in the child's life - need to be in regular contact with each other while raising the child.

While on the face of it, parents accept it, on the ground, often this expectation of being in regular contact and sharing ideas of what it means to raise a child together, is not always clearly understood and leads to confusion.

Today I would like to clarify some of those points of confusions by illustrating certain scenarios that emerge and pose challenges to our working together.

There are three main challenges I would like to share with you today (Time, Synergy in Philosophical approach, and Communication)

**Time:** Typically, CFL is quite demanding of parents, in terms of time, energy and stamina.

Since the idea is that we 'raise a child together', it is clear to us that parents need to spend time with their children.

Some situations emerge from our experience—

When parents have demanding careers that doesn't allow for much time to be spent with family, they often feel a disconnect because of the variety of conversations that are happening in school that children would also need require parent involvement to process more fully.

Sometimes it is left to one parent.

Sometimes, the school ends up being the 'caretaker' of the child's emotional landscape.

What we do observe is that not being in touch affects us in working well together. We would like both parents to be very actively involved and if your current life/work circumstance doesn't allow this, please do consider if this is a good choice for you as a family.

Remember, that our relationship is with your family and not only with your child. (The boundaries of family and school will need to be redefined in order to meet the demands of the child and the family.)

**Synergy in Philosophical approach:** The engagement between adults here takes on a form often foreign for many adults. The philosophical enquiry - so central to the school – **must** make sense for you, for it will play out in many different ways in your life here. The grounds on which we relate have to be established early on, beginning now, with the start of the admission process. We are working together in 'good faith' that we are all interested in learning about ourselves.

That is not the ground of debate. We can question, challenge each other on many things but if the intention is not similar, then we often find ourselves working very differently and then the impact is seen on children. Frustration builds up on both sides, alienation happens and soon we stop 'meeting' each other.

Linked to this is something new parents as well as old face as a challenge. This has to do with tenacity and resilience. Early on, it may be difficult to understand the nature of the philosophical enquiry, the style. It is understandable and we request that you persist with it. Sometimes due to the ways in which we relate, fatigue sets in. We request you to stay with it, share that with us, and together we can find ways to work through it. The resilience may come because our intentions are similar.

I have touched upon two areas – time and philosophical approach.

The third is and I will spend a little bit of time on this.

### **Communication:**

It is quite easy to say that we are all open to communication and as an idea, many of us will find that appealing. However, our experience, here at CFL is often quite different. Communication – clear and open – is perhaps our

biggest challenge. Our communication between parents and teachers is not only the communication of information and is certainly not restricted to the topic of children.

We are interested in you as a person, not only as a parent. To that end, we share about many things including: sharing the concerns we have of children, of ourselves, interpersonal relationships, sharing our philosophical questions, sharing our ideological leanings, sharing our observations of our patterns of thoughts and behaviours that we find ourselves in.

It is not easy ... it certainly is not easy to talk of oneself with the kind of authenticity or the kind of openness, laying bare one's emotions and thoughts to another. To talk of oneself in simple, clear language, to share one's feelings, insecurities, abilities, inabilities are all difficult, especially with a set of adults that you do not know well. A challenge that often emerges is that many of these become apparent to us in our relating, in our communicating. To be present to those is a very significant challenge for many of us.

There are other challenges in this realm of communication:

1. The first has to do with the perceived separation between home and school - (and this is something that we often come across as very challenging for parents).

Clearly, children inhabit two spaces – the home and the school. How do children experience these spaces? The house and the school need not be the same – that is clear. However, the grounds on which the children experience adults relating with them must be similar. We hear from children that at home they hear some of the following from their parents: “in school you can talk about all this but not here. You can talk with your teachers about self-inquiry etc. but in the world out there, such things don't make any sense.” Effectively, children hear the ways in which we are different and at various points it causes a lot of confusions for them and for us, as teachers, for we wonder if we – as adults – are working at cross purposes. Another example, in school we will question the very nature of belief – political, religious; we will question the basis of our values. We will question the moral grounds on which each of us stands, and not because we find debate interesting, but because we want to understand the grounds on which our beliefs rests and, importantly, why do we need to have beliefs? If from such an

environment, the child enters the home where beliefs are not questioned but actively encouraged, then clearly that poses a problem. We are not saying we need to have the same beliefs but we do need to be on the same ground of being open to questioning beliefs, ideologies, etc.

2. Another aspect of communication that parents find especially hard to grapple with has to do with children communicating with them. Early on, children communicate with the parents and teachers very freely. They will come and share with you all kinds of interesting tidbits about school. Within a few years, as they age, the nature of communication will change and during the adolescent years you may experience that you and your child are moving apart. We recognize that this is hard for many parents and to be in touch with the school becomes doubly important. Hang in there! We will, together, have to meet the changing nature of your child.

3. You would also need to be patient about how your child takes to the school. Not all children are happy here. Many are unhappy, for a variety of reasons. It will not be an easy ride. But, we can meet the situation together, communicating freely, openly, honestly.

4. And here's the last bit – that honesty has to be translated into action. If there is anything you disagree with or have an issue with (even if it is minor but persistent), you must share that with us. Often parents have kept some irritations for years. Sometimes, parents share with other parents but not with the school. Clearly, this is not the kind of situation we would want. Some parents have asked: "If I share something that is problematic, how will it affect my child." We want to reassure you that nothing you share will impact the ways in which we interact with your child. We are interested in relating with you, understanding you, including the areas where there are disagreements, potential conflicts.

I have talked about a variety of areas that are challenging for us as adults. These are tough challenges and not, perhaps, particular to CFL.

However, at CFL, we are, by the very nature of this co-created culture, forced to meet these challenges. The support we give each other is significant.

We are not service providers; a lot of time, energy goes into working with you and your children and If we are 'largely' not on the same page, it just doesn't make sense.

We are sharing our thoughts with transparency; to start the relationship on that makes sense. Please do consider these seriously while applying.

And I will end with the following:

If I ask you:

1. Am I interested in the school for my child?

Many if not all will say, yes, that is why I am here.

However, ask yourself the following question:

2. Am I really interested in questioning, living, learning about myself, and conditioning and exploring these questions together?

If the answer to this is No, or a reluctant yes ... then I would sincerely urge you to not apply. Even if the answer is yes, please understand that it will be a difficult journey, where you will be vulnerable, where we will challenge each other, and where time, energy and stamina are required.