



REPORT_{to} PARENTS

RP 29:4

How to Succeed with School Personnel

No child sails through his or her entire school life without at least a few rough waters. Sometimes it's a classmate who's causing problems. Sometimes it's an issue of how the teacher handles the class or treats a child. Sometimes it's a big misunderstanding. And, yes, sometimes the problem is even with your child. No matter what the issue, there are some tried-and-true ways to make dealing with problems at school much smoother.

Start with the teacher. The best first step is to call your child's teacher and set up a phone conference to discuss the problem. Often, the next step is a face-to-face meeting at the school, either with or without your child. Only if the problem is still unresolved should you take it to the next level—a meeting with the principal.

Don't be afraid. Many of us feel like children again when we have to meet with the teacher or principal. While these educators are in positions of authority, they're also adults just like you who are interested in your child's education and eager to make the situation better. Don't worry that raising issues with them will "hurt" your child in the classroom. Leaving problems unresolved can be more problematic.

Think positively. In preparation for a meeting with school personnel, envision that everything will work out for the best. A positive attitude makes it easier for everyone to calmly discuss the issues and find solutions.

Get the facts—from both sides. Sit down with your child and write down his or her version of the situation. If it's a problem with grading or schoolwork, bring along examples of papers that illustrate your points. Then go through the issues with the teacher and listen to his or her perspective.

Take off the rose-colored glasses. It's hard to hear a teacher say that your child is having issues in class, but the situation won't improve unless you understand the teacher's side of things as well.

Use some psychology. No matter how frustrated you are, you can make the situation better if you offer positive comments. For example, if you're meeting with your child's teacher think of the good things you've heard about the class. Teachers need to know that you see their good efforts as well.

Be respectful. Even if the teacher is "to blame," it's important that you and your child behave respectfully. Children learn what they live and should observe you treating others with respect at all times.

Decide on a solution—together. Work with your child's teacher to come up with a written list of how to resolve the situation. There should be items for you and your child to address and items for the teacher to address. Have the teacher make a copy of the list for both of you, and then schedule a follow-up appointment to see what progress has been made.

Follow up on your end. If a teacher has asked you to work on some issues with your child at home, it's important that you do so. You certainly expect the teacher to follow through with what he or she has promised, and it's only fair that you do the same.

Be realistic. Not every school year will be perfect. Sometimes, children and teachers just don't "click." But by dealing with situations calmly and by focusing on the solutions—not the problems—you'll be making the best of the year for you and your child.

