

Resolving Differences Between Teachers and Parents

Teachers and parents share responsibility for the education and socialization of children, and it is important that they be mindful of the impact of their interactions as a model of problem-solving behavior. It is necessary for both teachers and parents to be discreet and respectful in expressing their thoughts and feelings to each other, and to avoid involving children in their disagreements.

Strategies for Parents

- **Listen to your child.** Paying close attention to comments about what is going on at school is vital to learning about any difficulties your child may be experiencing. However, it is important to maintain a nonjudgmental attitude while listening to your child's side of a story, realizing that there may be aspects to the situation that are still unknown.
- **Decide if a call to the school is necessary.** It is helpful for parents to decide whether the issue is serious enough to warrant contacting the school. A cooling off period may be appropriate before making this decision.
- **Talk directly with the teacher in person or by phone.** It is important to check the facts with the teacher first before drawing conclusions or allocating blame. Direct contact with the teacher helps to define the problem accurately and to develop a solution. Keep in mind that the end of the day, when you are picking up your child, may not be the best time for a discussion involving strong feelings. If you cannot resolve the problem, it may be necessary to contact the principal.
- **Avoid criticizing the teachers in front of children.** Criticizing teachers and schools in front of children may confuse them. Even very young children can pick up the worry, frustration, or disdain that parents may feel concerning their children's school experiences. In the case of the youngest children, it is not unusual for them to attribute heroic qualities to their teachers and hearing criticism may put them in a bind over divided loyalties. In the case of older children, such criticism may foster rudeness or defiance to their teachers. Besides causing confusion, criticizing teachers in front of children is not conducive to solving the underlying problem.

- Source: Florida Center for Parent Involvement, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida; <http://cfs.fmhi.usf.edu/dares/fcpi/statement.html>