

Talking to Angry Parents:

- What is one way that you can start by being gracious when talking to an angry parent?
- In a practical sense if a parent asks to meet with you can bring someone with you? If you have never done this before is it something you could do? (I would recommend someone in senior leadership if at all possible a pastor or an elder, for example.)
- Think about it. How can you stick to the issue at hand without allowing the parent to bring up any other "issue" they think might be happening.
- Do you know those things that will put you on the defensive? What are some ways that you can ensure you stay calm even when you might even be getting yelled at? Do you need to take a deep breath? Would it be better to ask the parent if they can meet when they are more calm?
- Do you have someone that you can talk to and pray with after you speak with the parent?

Remember, often our role in the situation is to remind the parent we are both on the same side. We want what is best for the child.

Sample Script:

Go to them. If at all possible visit the the home.

If you need to set up a meeting where they can meet you.

ALWAYS meet in person. Do all that you can to never deal with an upset parent on the phone or in an email. Sitting face to face, helps to dissolve situations.

If you must work something out, not in person, do it on the phone.

NEVER deal an upset parent in writing. Tone is too hard to tell in your words.

If a parent keeps trying to deal with a situation via email, keep pushing to set up a live meeting.

When visiting a home or having a meeting try to go in twos if at all possible. This gives you backup if you feel like you don't know what to say.

Before the call/visit: Pray!

Make sure that you know the name of the parent you are calling and all other adults in the household. ONLY speak to the parent(s) or the approved guardian(s) in the house. If you do not know the parent well ensure you have all names correct first. (This should only be the case early in the year or with new students, try to get to know the names of your parents and meet them at least once.)

Remember to speak clearly and be articulate.

Remember: It is an honor and a privilege you are allowed to have this student in your group. No matter who the student or the parent is.

Remember the 3 A's:

1. ALWAYS remain calm. Do not raise your voice with a parent. ALWAYS show the parent respect. No matter how you feel about them, this is the student's parent and they have the final say.
2. AVOID getting defensive. No matter how much it might feel like it, you are not on trial. Continue to present the facts. Do not argue with a parent. Bring it back constantly to the facts of the situation.
3. If there is excessive yelling or anger, gently ASK the parent to calm down. Then continue with the facts. DO NOT get emotional. (As hard as it can be for some of us, DO NOT take it personally. This is a parent siding with their child, even if their child is in the wrong.) If the parent will not calm down, ASK if you could speak with them another time. If you feel that you have run out of words, do not be afraid to ASK if they would like to either set up a face-to-face meeting with you or talk at another time when the parent is calm.

Sometimes the conversations can get "circular." Meaning that a parent comes in with a "situation." No matter what you say, they just keep wanting things their "way." You might feel like no matter how you try to state a clear standing, they just keep coming back to the same points.

When this happens: STAY THE COURSE. Remain calm. Find new ways to state your point. Do not get agitated or angry. If you find yourself getting frustrated, take a moment catch yourself.

Ending the conversation:

1. Make sure the parent knows that you love the student and want to do all that you can to help them. You are on the side of the family.
2. End with something specific and positive that you love about this student.
3. Ask the parent how you can help them with their child. Remind them you are on the same page and want what they want for their child – the best.