

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL

PRESENTS:

PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

Building Cooperation with School People

The ideal role parents play in their child's school life centers around encouragement and good modeling. They leave the school discipline to the teachers and administrators and allow the child to handle his or her own school problems. However, there are times when things are not ideal and a parent must become involved in the school situation. This can be a difficult position. If it's not handled with tact, your child may feel unable to handle his/her own problems in the future.

Instead of storming into the teacher's room offering solutions, we need to collect information and think about the choices given. Parents make three common mistakes when talking with teachers:

1. We tell the teacher what to do. When we say, "I want my kid out of that classroom," what we are really saying is, "You aren't smart enough to figure out what to do, so I've got to tell you."
2. We go into the school with threats, "If you won't help, I'm going to go to the principal." This creates even more problems than we had when we came in.
3. We muster an army of like-minded parents to assault the teacher en masse. Any victory in this sort of confrontation will be short-lived, for the teacher will fight for his or her life. A variation of this tactic is saying, "I'm not the only one who's upset with this situation. A lot of others are too."

Parents who get the best results with teachers use the magic word "describe." It's magic because when we use it we aren't judging: "I'd like to describe something that's happening, and then give you my interpretation of it."

When we've had our say, we can use some more magic words - "I'd like to get your thoughts on that." By saying this, we are telling the teacher that we have confidence that he or she can think for himself or herself. It is also a way of getting valuable and surprising information. For example, a child who is easy to work with at home one-on-one, may not respond the same way in a larger group. The teacher's reading of the situation is usually very helpful. We are able to get the teacher's best suggestions if we don't put the teacher on the defense.

Another approach is to ask, "What kind of options are available to solve a problem like this," and then allow the teacher to do the thinking for a while. This shows the teacher that we are open to looking at more than one way of solving the problem. People who use this technique find that others are much more friendly and helpful.

In the event that we do not get satisfaction with the teacher and want to kick the problem up the ladder, we should say, "Would you mind going with me to see if the principal has any thoughts on this?" That's a whole lot better than saying, "If I don't get my way, I'm going to the principal."

Our chief mission in approaching a teacher is to discuss our child's problem and resolve it—to talk as well as listen, to suggest as well as take suggestions. Good common sense values of communication and respect for others are much more effective than commands and threats.

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