

I have a problem at my child's school. Who should I talk to?

We want all parental concerns resolved in an expedient and fair manner. When appropriate, any concern should be directed through your student's teacher first. An administrator will not act on your behalf until a parent has met to discuss the concern with the teacher first.

The following tips from the U.S. Department of Education will help you effectively address your concerns:

1. Work with the Teacher First

Continuing communication with teachers is very important in solving problems. As you work with your child's teacher, here are some important things to remember:

- **Talk with each of your child's teachers early in the school year.** Get acquainted before problems arise and let each teacher know that you want to be kept informed. Most elementary and middle schools hold regular parent-teacher conferences or open houses. If your child's school doesn't provide such opportunities, call the teacher to set up a meeting.
- **Contact the teacher as soon as you have a concern.** By quickly alerting the teacher of your concern, you can work together to solve a problem in its early stages.
- **Request a meeting with the teacher to discuss the issue.** Tell the teacher why you want to meet. You might say, "Rachel is having trouble with her math homework. I'm worried about why she can't finish the problems and what we might do to help her." If English is your second language, you may need to make special arrangements, such as including in the meeting someone who is bilingual.
- **Approach the teacher with a cooperative spirit.** Believe that the teacher wants to help you and your child, even if you disagree about something. Don't go to the principal without giving the teacher a chance to work out the problem with you and your child.
- **During your meeting with the teacher, explain what you think is going on.** In addition, tell the teacher if you don't know what the problem is. Sometimes a student's version of what's going on isn't the same as the teacher's version. For example, your child may tell you that the teacher never explains assignments so that he can understand them. But the teacher may tell you that your child isn't paying attention when assignments are given.
- **Work out a way to solve or lessen the problem.** The strategy will depend on what the problem is, how severe it is and what the needs of your child are.
- **Make sure that communication is clear.** Listen to the teacher and don't leave until you're sure that you understand what's being said. Make sure, too, that the teacher understands what you have to say. If, after the meeting, you realize you don't understand something, call the teacher to clarify.

2. Contact the Building Administrator

A majority of the time your concern should be resolved by working directly with the teacher.

However, if you have not received resolution to your concern after working directly with your child's teacher, it is appropriate for you to contact the school's Building Administrator.

3. Contact the Superintendent's Office

If your child is having a problem in his classroom, you should first communicate with the teacher. If you feel that the teacher is not responding adequately, contact the Building Administrator. If

communication fails with the Building Administrator, then take the problem to the Superintendent's Office. The Superintendent or designee will want to know that you have attempted to handle a problem in this way before bringing it to their attention.

If you have a concern that applies to the entire school district (such as declining achievement levels throughout the district or mass flight out of the district), then it is appropriate to approach the superintendent first.