

Time to have 'the talk'?

Know when and how to approach a teacher about classroom concerns

Teachers are putting grades into various computer programs as we speak. Conferences and mid-terms are a done deal for the time being. Students should be evaluating their successes over the past 10 weeks, and what they need to do to improve during the next grading period.

Communicating with teachers is imperative, especially since they are the ultimate beholder of issuing grades. The fact of the matter is that each student earns his or her own grade, which is then determined within the systematic formulations decided by each teacher's grading method. Teachers tell students about their expectations within the first few days of school.

When to chat up your teacher

Hypothetically speaking, let's say a student experiences difficulty in specific classes. Scenario one: The student attends class regularly, almost consistently completes assignments, and claims to prepare for assessments and projects. For some reason, this student isn't earning a grade that reflects that effort. Talking to the teacher is the best way to find out why. It may be a matter of incomplete work or total misunderstanding of concepts. Whatever the case may be, the proactive approach to the situation is to find out firsthand the teacher's thoughts and recommendations, instead of trying to guess what he is thinking.

Scenario two: The student has



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infrequent attendance, consistently does not complete or attempt assignments, and is never aware that an assessment or project is happening. For obvious reasons, this student is failing. Speaking with the teacher

allows the student to understand why they need to attend class and complete assignments. Making the effort to meet with the teacher would be the first step toward a solution.

The scenarios will vary. The bottom line is that it is of utmost importance to correspond with the teacher. There are two ways of conversing: appropriately and inappropriately.

Keep communication positive

An appropriate method of deliberating with teachers is to present your view of the situation and ask for advice as to the remedy of any problems that may exist. Keep an open mind and listen to their side of the story. Use positive language, especially when communicating negative feelings.

Instead of saying "Your lousy teaching methods don't work for my child. This is why she is not learning," try something along the lines of "My child seems to find difficulty understanding the methods being used. What can we do to improve this situation?" Every-

one is allowed to convey negative emotions, but when done within positive language, you get better results.

On the flip side, inappropriate techniques of discussion include being closed minded, putting the teacher on the defensive, and choosing unsuitable words and phrases to express concerns. It is difficult to resolve and issue when your temper is heated and your ability to reason is non-existent. Unfortunately, there are scenarios like these between parents, students and teachers. When these circumstances arise, a mediator, such as an administrator or counselor needs to be present to maintain the necessary levels

that are sometimes exceeded in such intense moments.

It's not what you say; it's how you say it. In order to achieve desired outcomes, people need to be conscience of how they present

information. We teach our students to be respectful and polite when speaking with others. Adults should do the same.

Believe it or not, teachers are people who, for the most part, are approachable and willing to fix a problematic situation. When students are having trouble in class, speak with the teacher to find out how to solve and work toward eliminating any predicaments that hinder their learning.

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