

STEPS to HANDLING a PARENT CONCERN

1. **Start with a smile and greeting!** Think about your body language.
–In email, show gratitude and positivity.
2. **Move over!** If necessary, move to a better area for conversation.
3. **Put your listening ears on.** Truly listen and be open; try to see things from their perspective. Active listening is important; be open to feedback. Getting defensive makes things worse.
4. **Clarify!** Make no assumptions. If you don't understand the concern or need more details, it's okay to ask.
5. **I hear you!** Acknowledge the concern. Even if you disagree, to them, their concern is real and important.
6. **Choose a strategy or two:**
 - a. When you know you made a mistake, admit, apologize, and move on.
 - b. Educate
 - i. Often concerns stem from a place of being mis or un informed
 - ii. Remember you're the expert in education; *they* are the expert on their child.
 - iii. Share any relevant info (policies, safety considerations, etc.)
 - c. Problem solve and offer a solution
 - d. Enlist help!
7. **Say thank you!** Appreciate the feedback - even if not all justified, we can always look for improvements. Wrap up with - "please keep me posted..."
8. **Enact the solution and follow up!**

TIPS and REMINDERS for DEALING with PARENTS

- **Parents love their kids so much that sometimes they can be irrational or quick to speak; this is not their fault (and certainly not yours). It's human nature.**
- **You are the expert in teaching. Parents are the experts in their child.**
- **There should be no parent vs staff dynamic - you both have the same goal, which is doing what is best for the child (state that!).**
- **You are not expected to have all the answers, but you should certainly help to find them.**
- **Be agreeable whenever possible.**
- **Be empathetic. Most parents don't want to (or mean to) lose their cool. You do NOT have to "take" yelling, arguing, etc. - you can address them at another time. Just remember we don't always know what people are dealing with.**
- **Be proactive in developing a positive relationship with your students' parents.**
 - **Be present at the door, make eye contact, say hello, smile**
 - **Use their child's name in front of them**
 - **Share success stories; put a reminder in your calendar if needed!**
- **Give information so that parents don't fill the gaps with their own stories. Similarly, check yourself before you assume a story about parents without facts.**
- **Trust administration has your back. Ask for feedback on communication!**
- **Remember that MOST parents are actually lovely. Don't let 5% of the more challenging ones stop you from building a great rapport with the other 95%!**

Adapted from recgympros, 2023