

When Tackling Problems at a Parent-Teacher Conference or in School-Home Correspondence

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It helps to include:

- A Positive Statement
- An Acknowledgement of the Common Goal of student success
- What the student needs to do in order to succeed in general
- What the student can do now/first priorities
- What we do here in class/in school to support students or How we handle various classroom situations when they occur
- What we can do together to help
- A specific plan
- Thank you

In general, the emphasis must be on what the student must do in order to succeed going forward.

Avoid	Instead
Doing all the talking	Take time to listen. Be patient and suspend judgment. When the opportunity presents, ask the parent what he/she needs from you.
Being vague or general about student behavior or performance (“your child was disrespectful.”)	Be specific about what the student needs to do in order to succeed going forward. (“In order to have positive classroom discussions, our students need to show patience when others are speaking.”)
Contesting/Recounting exactly what happened in the past	Be specific about what the student needs to do in order to succeed going forward.
Defending your actions.	Explain what you do to help students succeed or explain your procedures for handling classroom situations. (these can counter an accusation without having to debate versions of what happened)
Judging “why” the student is behaving or performing poorly	Lay out what the student needs <i>to do</i> going forward. (Avoid shaming or blaming!)
Trying to convince parent that student has messed up	Suggest how the parent can work with you to help the student succeed going forward.
Respond defensively or derisively.	Suspend judgement. Remind yourself that every parent/guardian loves their child and wants the best for their child.

- End with a plan and don’t make promises that you can’t realistically keep.
- Reinforce the shared goal: the student’s success!
- Make clear your expectation that the student can succeed.
- Assign to the student the responsibility to improve, with your support and with the support of the parent/guardian.