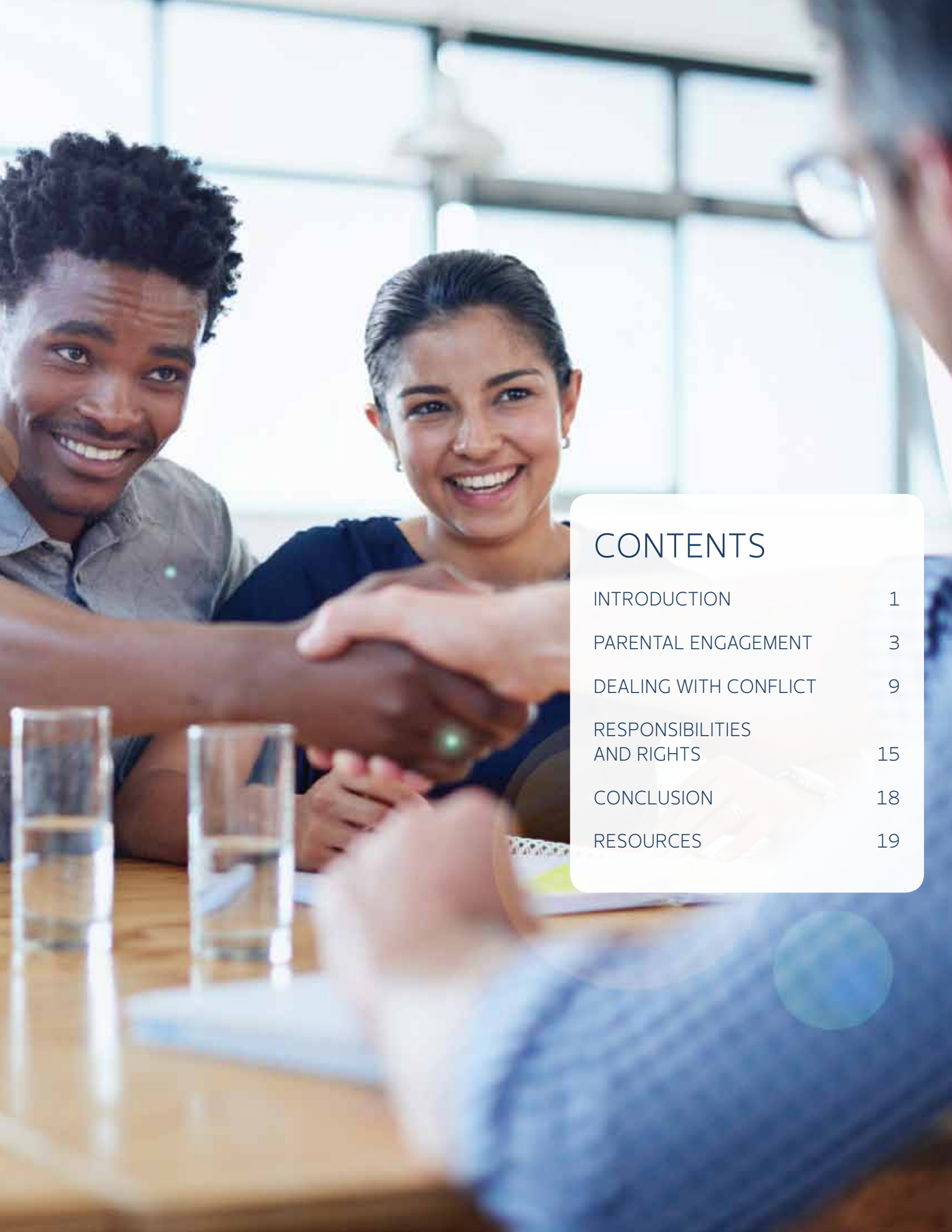




# Building Positive Relationships with Parents





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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

As trained, certified professionals, teachers are experts at how to deliver curriculum and get the most out of students in the classroom. But we are certainly not alone when it comes to the delivery of education in Ontario. We have many partners whose roles are essential to ensuring successful outcomes for students. Chief among these partners are parents.\*

Parents place their trust in us to educate their children and help foster their growth and development. In turn, we hope that our students will receive support and reinforcement for their classroom learning at home.

If relationships with parents are managed properly, parents can be our best allies for achieving student success, fostering equity, and developing a genuine school community. They can offer vital insights into their child's interests and challenges. They can help ensure that work is turned in on time and to the best of students' abilities.

And if they are confident in the work we do, parents can be advocates for our union, publicly funded Catholic education, and the teaching profession. They will be more likely to stand up for our interests in discussions with their neighbours, colleagues, and political representatives.

The overwhelming majority of relationships with parents are positive and productive. However some teachers have experienced problematic or destructive relationships with parents. The sting from poor parent-teacher relationships is upsetting and can destroy a teacher's career.

It is in everyone's best interest to develop and foster positive and professional working relations with parents. This begins with effective communication, because most conflicts are a result of misunderstandings that could have been avoided.

This resource is intended to provide a realistic and workable guide for teachers in promoting positive interactions with parents. It discusses how to proactively build relationships, examines possible sources of conflict, and gives some steps you might take if conflicts arise.

\*Throughout this document, reference to parents includes guardians and other caregivers.





# CHAPTER TWO

# PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

## ESTABLISHING COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

It is wise to begin establishing positive relations with parents early in the school year. Start with developing various methods to communicate with parents about classroom expectations and routines, discipline methods, course guidelines, marking schemes, and communication protocols.

### Elements of a good classroom communication protocol

#### Invitations to parents for their input and information

Let them know that you welcome information that might affect their child's progress in the classroom. Record all such information.

#### Regular communications with home

Keep parents well apprised of what is happening in the classroom, providing timely information so as to avoid surprises. Let them know about school events, class projects, and reporting periods. Make parents feel welcomed, and let them know when and how they can reach you. Of course, these interactions should be limited to school time and location. Do not give out your personal telephone number, home address, or email address.

#### Expectations and discipline practices

Make it clear how you will inform parents if something is wrong. For example, you can send a letter home to all parents on a regular basis, then telephone them individually about issues that are more personal and/or important.

#### Classroom visiting procedures

Parents have the right to visit your classroom, but this should be in consultation with you and in line with the school and school board visitor policies. These procedures should be clearly explained to parents, early and often. Depending on the age of the students, it might be a good idea to establish a designated parent visiting day, when parents can come to your classroom and observe their children. Always explain to parents your expectations of their behaviour during these visits.

#### Constant communication and documentation

Maintaining regular contact with parents prevents misunderstandings and can head off many potential conflicts before they arise. Following your own protocol can also help protect you from false allegations. Document all communication with parents – written or verbal, in person or over the phone – so you have a record of what occurred and what was said.

## CREATING ALLIES

Teachers are role models who hold positions of trust, and we are expected to uphold certain values. These expectations continue 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Parents are often in the school throughout the day, attending meetings, visiting classrooms, or volunteering. Be considerate and careful when making comments in the hall or staff room, especially at the end of a hectic day or when you need to discuss concerns with colleagues. The school might not be the most appropriate place to vent. Neither is a neighbourhood bar or restaurant, especially if you live in a small community.

Remember that your ultimate goal in communicating with parents is to bring them on board with your mission to foster student success and well-being while promoting equity and inclusivity. To this end, you should endeavour to keep all parents apprised of things they should know, do, or observe. Creating common expectations and being transparent about what is necessary to meet these expectations are key steps to developing constructive partnerships.

Your strategies will depend on your individual teaching style, school or board policies, and the roles and responsibilities set out in Ministry of Education documents and your collective agreement. However, below are some actions you might consider.

- Share information about how the curriculum and ideas about pedagogy are evolving. Work with parents to develop shared understandings of the “growth mindset.”
- Identify the skills and work habits students will be expected to exhibit and give ideas about how parents can encourage these at home.
- Share a sample unit or lesson plan to demonstrate what students will be learning, and what they will be expected to know and do.
- Co-create, with students, classroom norms and codes of conduct. Share these with parents, and explicitly discuss how you will endeavour to make safety and well-being a priority.
- Get to know your students. Alert parents to sudden changes in behaviour, attitudes, etc.
- Welcome parents as guest speakers or invite them to help plan activities that recognize the cultural diversity of your class or school.

A problem-solving approach can help avoid conflicts in the future. As a teacher, it is your duty to identify concerns with your students and look for workable solutions. The ideal strategy will be one that you develop with parents, but you might also need to seek out assistance, for example through the school board's Student Services department.

We maintain certain boundaries with our students, and we should also maintain professional distance from parents. Be careful about establishing relationships with parents that become friendships. You are the child's teacher above all. Conversely, you should never tolerate unwelcome comments about your appearance,



unwelcome touching, visits to your home, frequent visits to your classroom for no apparent reason, or any other behaviour that makes you feel uncomfortable.

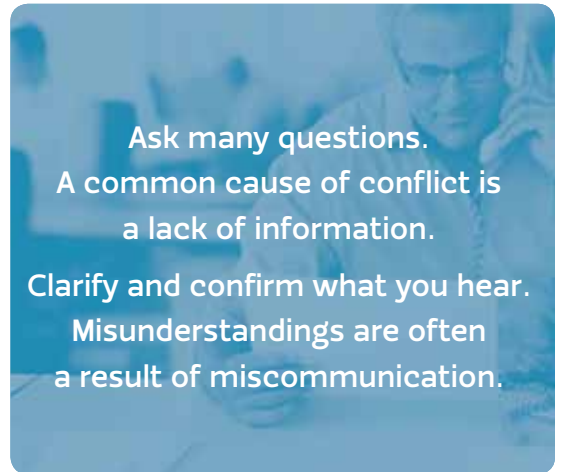
For more ideas and resources on building relationships with parents, see the Ontario Teachers' Federation's Parent Engagement website at [www.parentengagement.ca](http://www.parentengagement.ca).

## TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS

Routine information can be communicated in writing, however, particularly sensitive information is usually best shared in person. Direct telephone conversation is also a good way to communicate with parents, as it allows for more personal interaction, without the formality of an actual meeting.

Below are some tips that will help you make phone calls pleasant and constructive.

- Consider the timing of your call. Calls should ideally be made during your work hours. If calls must be placed after hours, be mindful that people do not like being disturbed during supertime or late at night.
- Be specific about the purpose of your call and stay focused on your objective.
- Tell the parent about your concerns, expectations and/or plans. Do not expect the parent to read your mind. If their child has misbehaved and you want support for a course of action, state your request clearly.
- Avoid only calling with bad news. Some teachers make a habit of making at least one good news call to every parent each year. It can be surprising how pleased parents are when the school calls with good news.
- If the parent seems short or reticent, keep in mind that you don't know what other issues the parent may be dealing with.
- Remember that telephones are not always private. This can stifle honest and open conversation.
- Do not call when you are angry.
- Understand that the topic is their child. Be sensitive to their feelings and concerns. If the parent is angry, schedule a discussion for a later time.
- When a parent calls you, return their call as quickly as possible.
- Protect your privacy. Use the school telephone whenever possible. If you have to use your own phone, use caller identification blockers.



*An important component of communication is the ability to listen and interpret the concerns of the parent. Only when a teacher truly understands the concerns of a parent can the concerns be addressed.*

## IN PERSON MEETINGS

Face-to-face communication with parents is by far the most effective. However, because it is so time-consuming, it is generally reserved for reporting periods or for discussing important issues.

Teachers should keep in mind how stressful it is for many parents to meet their child's teacher. Individual parents might have very different school experiences to draw on and differing expectations and perceptions about school. There may also be conflicting views as a result of changes to the school system or because of cultural differences. Do your best to put parents at ease.

Your tone and demeanour during the meeting are important.

### Tips for Positive Parent-Teacher Interviews/Meetings

- Arrive on time. Punctuality is a sign of respect.
- Greet the parent warmly and be polite at all times.
- Address the parent by name and with respect.
- Focus on the issue. Do not get sidetracked or introduce new problems.
- Share all the information on hand and seek understanding from the parent.
- Do not do all the talking. Listen to the parent and invite their suggestions.
- Do not compare students.
- Remember that the purpose of the meeting is to enhance learning and student well-being.



#### *Consider your body language.*

*Is your body language sending a different message than your spoken words? Folded arms, avoiding eye contact, foot tapping, pen flicking, leaning back or turning away can send the wrong message.*

## EMAIL, TEXTING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Teachers are increasingly using email, social media, and texting to communicate with parents. These forms of communication are common for many parents, especially younger ones, and are great for the quick dissemination of straightforward information.

However, as a general rule, OECTA advises teachers to avoid electronic communication with parents. If you do choose to use these tools, there are several things you should consider.

- Like letter writing, electronic communication is not the best way to convey sensitive information or to communicate when a response or agreement is required.



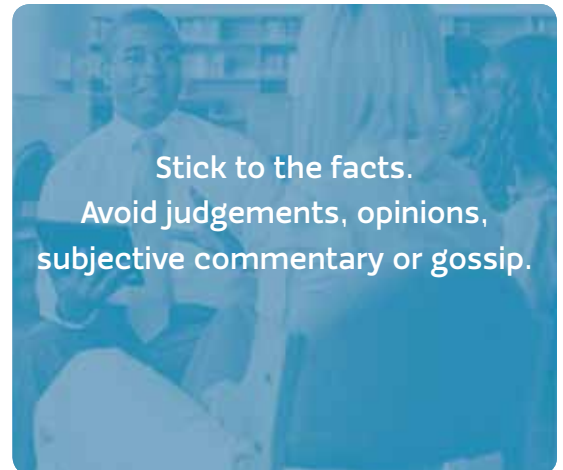
- Some households do not have a computer or smartphones. Always offer an alternative to electronic communication.
- Remember that all electronic communication to a parent can be saved, printed or forwarded to others. Exercise appropriate discretion.
- Electronic communications can be manipulated – ensure you keep a copy of your original message.
- Be aware of your professional liabilities and always maintain your professionalism when dealing with parents. There have been cases before the College of Teachers in which spelling mistakes and grammatical errors have been used against teachers.
- These interactions should be limited to school time and location.
- Do not give parents or students your personal email or social media accounts. Use only school or board accounts. Using personal accounts can cause many problems for teachers.

## DOCUMENT! DOCUMENT! DOCUMENT!

If you establish early contact with parents, and you keep each other abreast of ongoing issues and concerns, you will likely be able to work together to help students function in the school environment and achieve their goals in the classroom. However, as we will discuss in the next chapter, it is still possible for conflicts to arise.

For this reason, you should get into the habit of documenting every single communication with parents.

- Keep a file on routine communications that you send home with students, as well as all telephone calls, meetings and evaluations.
- Write brief, objective notes during discussions with parents that include what was said and by whom, the problems identified and their resolutions, who took responsibility for what, and any expected timelines. Stick to the facts and avoid writing opinions or subjective commentary.
- Remember that these notes constitute a formal record and should not be shared in a non-professional context. Keep them in a safe and secure place.
- Sometimes complaints are raised months or years after an event. While memories fade, objective notes made at the time can be very helpful.



It is wise to keep your principal informed of your communication strategies. Ask if there are school or school board templates for formal contact with parents. This will help to avoid duplication or contradiction. If a problem with a parent arises, it helps if your principal has been aware of your actions from the beginning.



# CHAPTER THREE

## DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Despite your best efforts to reach out and build positive relationships, conflict with parents occurs from time to time in the normal course of every teacher's career. This can be upsetting, but it does not need to be counterproductive. Well-managed conflict can help to clarify issues and feelings. All teachers should enhance their conflict resolution skills to reduce stress and frustration when conflict does arise.

Many conflicts grow out of differences in expectations, experiences or even personality types. Letting go of ideas of right versus wrong creates the space to take a step back, so we can understand what underlying factors might be contributing to the escalation of a conflict. When those factors are taken into account, both parties are better able to appreciate the other's perspective, helping to move toward a solution from a place of mutual understanding.

### SOURCES OF CONFLICT

To handle a conflict with a parent successfully, learn to understand the sources of conflict. In general there are six main categories.

<p><b>Resources</b></p> <p>Conflicts occur when resources are limited. A parent with a special needs child might not understand the lack of resources due to inadequate funding. A parent might not understand the teacher's decisions about the allocation of scarce resources in their classroom. If the resources needed are not available, refer the parent to the school principal.</p>	<p><b>Values</b></p> <p>People might feel personally attacked if they think their values are being threatened. The real issue is not usually the difference in values, but the fear that one set of values is being dominated. These conflicts can be the most difficult to resolve.</p>	<p><b>Incongruent Role Expectations and Behavioural Norms</b></p> <p>A parent might have an expectation of a particular teaching style that is different from yours. Or a parent who encourages a child to challenge authority figures might not accept the teacher's discipline of the child for "insubordination."</p>
<p><b>Incompatible Personalities</b></p> <p>In some instances, conflicts are simply due to differing personality types.</p>	<p><b>Divergent Goals</b></p> <p>Conflict might result when a teacher and a parent have completely different goals. For example, a teacher who stresses creativity and arts might come into conflict with a parent who values math and science above all.</p>	<p><b>Psychological Needs</b></p> <p>When psychological factors such as self-esteem, feelings of belonging or happiness are threatened, people can sometimes become aggressive. A parent who thinks that a teacher has belittled them, or who believes their child has been picked on, might lash out.</p>

## RESOLVING CONFLICT

In conflict resolution, it is helpful to reflect on the issues and decide whether they are interests or positions. Interests are our needs that motivate us to act in certain ways and to make certain decisions. For example, you need order in your classroom, so you create rules. A position is a stance that we adopt to meet those needs. For example, strictly enforcing the rules is the best way to ensure order in the classroom.

Positions can be changed. Successful conflict resolution focuses on understanding and addressing the interests of the parties rather than their positions. Focusing on interests allows the parties to discuss the real issues. So, rather than focusing on the rules and their application, focus on the real issue, which is the need for order.

### A suggested six-step process for resolving conflict

#### 1. Define the problem or source of the conflict

Use active listening skills to try to understand the parent's concerns and perspective. Reflect on your own actions and feelings. Have you inadvertently aggravated the situation? Have you been overly sensitive and overreacted? Is there any substance to the parent's criticism? If at the end of a meeting you and the parent can agree on the problem, that's a substantial achievement. Document the problem(s) and, if necessary, communicate with the parent in writing to confirm your mutual agreement.

#### 2. Get all the information

Sometimes conflict occurs because one party is unaware of certain facts. When discussing issues with parents, provide opportunities to share information. For example, are you aware that the child has a hearing disorder? Is the parent aware that the student noted the project due date in their homework book?

#### 3. State your goal

Be clear and specific. Ask the parent for their goal. Ask if they agree with your goal. Document the goal(s) and, if necessary, communicate with the parent in writing to confirm your mutual agreement.

#### 4. Develop strategies and possible solutions together

Brainstorm ideas and decide which are practical and most likely to succeed. Decide together which strategy to use.

#### 5. Outline timelines and expectations

Agree on reasonable timelines. If necessary, communicate with the parent in writing to confirm your timelines and expectations.

#### 6. Arrange for a follow-up meeting

Check to see if the parent is satisfied with the agreed upon actions. Make modifications to the strategy if necessary and agree upon the modifications. Take detailed notes after each meeting/discussion to avoid repetition.

## Early Signs of Potential Conflict

- Frequent and unscheduled school visits.
- Calls for no apparent reason.
- Calls to your home.
- Difficult and uncomfortable meetings.
- Refusal to agree on highlighted concerns.
- Student defiance supported by the parent.
- Rumour or gossip heard from other parents regarding a teacher's ability or character.
- Unexpected threats to call the College of Teachers, Children's Aid Society or the police.
- Calls or complaints to the administrator.



*Do not ignore an angry parent and do not ignore abusive language or behaviour. This will not resolve the conflict and may make the situation worse.*

## DE-ESCALATING CONFLICT

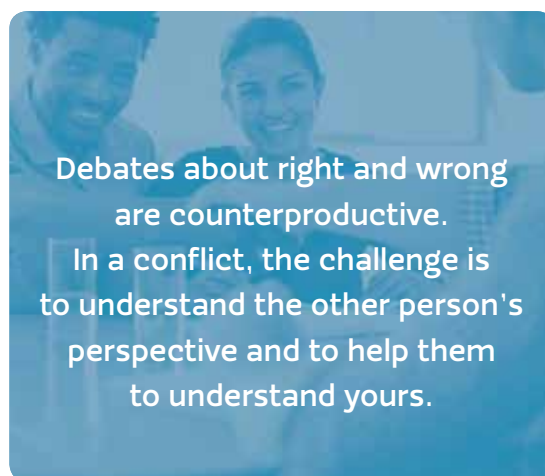
All interactions should be based on a foundation of mutual respect. If a conflict arises, try to put the situation in context and appreciate where the parent is coming from. Does the parent have legitimate concerns that need more attention? Have your actions aggravated the problem?

If the parent is raising honest concerns, it is your responsibility, and in your best interest, to address the situation in a calm, professional manner. Avoiding the problem will only make it worse in the long run.

Of course, you are well within your rights to insist on courtesy and maintain an environment where you feel safe. Remain professional and let the parent know that while you value what they have to say, you will not tolerate rudeness, threats or abuse. Terminate meetings or discussions if the parent becomes unreasonable, if you have previously addressed the concerns and the discussion is not moving forward, or if the parent's behaviour becomes threatening or intimidating in any way. Document these interactions and report them to your principal.

Always remember that you are not alone. You might want to bring in a third party if you anticipate that a meeting or discussion is going to be heated or deal with complex issues. Asking for help does not indicate weakness or an inability to handle difficult situations. You are entitled to seek support, and doing so shows good professional judgement.

In some cases, it might even be necessary to seek intervention by an administrator who has legislated authority to de-escalate the conflict. Seek assistance immediately if a parent's behaviour threatens your professional reputation, disrupts your ability to perform effectively, or becomes a danger to your health. The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* requires the school board to provide you with a safe working environment. Inform your principal and document the fact that you have reported the problem to the principal.



A school board policy or procedure might apply to the situation and provide some direction as to how the problem should be approached. Ideally, there should be a meeting to discuss any conflict with parents. You should be present at this meeting, as any positive resolution will involve you. Remember that it is the principal's job to protect your working conditions. The principal should listen to both sides, but you have the right to be publicly supported by your principal. Discussions about your teaching duties, abilities or performance appraisals should not be held in front of students or parents.

Some school boards employ the use of facilitators or trained mediators. This can be helpful, especially when emotions are running high, because an independent mediator can bring an air of objectivity and establish a problem-solving atmosphere, enabling the parties to focus on the issues.

If at any time you feel a situation is getting out of hand, or that you are not receiving the proper support from your school administration, contact your OECTA unit president or the Counselling and Member Services department at OECTA Provincial Office (1-800-268-7230).

## BEYOND CONFLICT – THREATENING AND DANGEROUS INTERACTIONS

In rare cases, interactions with parents can cross the line from upsetting to threatening or even dangerous. Bullying, harassment and defamation are offensive behaviours that could seriously affect your physical and mental health or your status in the teaching profession.

While there has been a great deal of emphasis placed on bullying in schools in recent year, that focus has predominantly been on behaviours exhibited by students toward other students.

The reality is that more and more teachers are reporting being bullied by students and by parents. Reports of parental harassment of teachers are on the rise. In a 2005 survey of teachers in Ontario, 30 per cent of respondents reported having been bullied by a parent or guardian. Rates of harassment were higher among elementary teachers and among female teachers. Additionally, OECTA reports increasing numbers of calls from members who are being bullied or harassed online – either on social media, in blog posts or via email.

The same codes of conduct that apply to students, teachers and staff also apply to parents. While on school premises or at school-related activities and events, parents must abide by the provincial and local school board codes of conduct. Inappropriate and disrespectful behaviours displayed by a parent, such as bullying, discrimination and harassment must be reported to your school administration. Administration is responsible for the enforcement of codes of conduct and board policies, which can be used to influence parental behaviour. Document all your interactions with parents – it may be necessary down the road to show an emerging pattern of behaviour.

**Harassment** – *The Ontario Human Rights Code defines harassment as "engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome."*

**Defamation** – *The Black's Law Dictionary defines defamation as "a statement that tends to injure the reputation of a person referred to in it. The statement is likely to lower that person in the estimation of reasonable people and in particular to cause that person to be regarded with feelings of hatred, contempt, ridicule, fear, or dislike."*

If the harassment is occurring online or in email there are a few additional steps you should take:

- Print, screen capture, or make a copy of the offensive post or email.
- Notify school administration – the material may violate a school or board code of conduct or other policy and if so, administration should request the parent to remove the offensive material.
- Contact OECTA – you may have grounds for a harassment or human rights complaint, a potential grievance or a defamation suit.
- Contact police – only the police can obtain the Internet Protocol (IP) address from the Internet Service Provider (ISP) to verify who posted the material.
- Contact the Internet Service Provider (ISP) or website to have the offending material removed. Most websites and social media sites do have policies and protocols regarding the posting and removal of offensive material.



*Contact the police if you believe there is an immediate threat to your safety or if materials posted violate the Criminal Code or constitute a hate crime.*

If you believe a parent's behaviour constitutes harassment, it may be possible to get an order from a judge, or to put the offending person on notice that further harassment will be grounds for a civil suit. It might also be necessary to take legal action if a parent is making defamatory statements – this is, statements that they know to be untrue and which are designed to harm your reputation. Civil suits should not be considered lightly, however. Any lawsuit is lengthy, expensive, public, and emotionally draining. This should only be considered after close examination and discussion with legal counsel. Only a few teachers in Canada have ever successfully sued parents for harassment or defamation.

If you believe that you are being bullied, harassed or defamed, you are advised to contact your OECTA unit president or the Counselling and Member Services Department at OECTA Provincial Office (1-800-268-7230). Our legal support team can provide valuable advice on dealing with your complaint.



## BULLYING

*According to the Government of Ontario, "Bullying is typically a form of repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.... Bullying is a dynamic of unhealthy interaction that can take many forms. It can be physical (e.g., hitting, pushing, tripping), verbal (e.g., name calling, mocking, or making sexist, racist, or homophobic comments), or social (e.g., excluding others from a group, spreading gossip or rumours)."*





# CHAPTER FOUR

## RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS

It is easier to navigate your relationships with parents if you understand the responsibilities and rights held by teachers, parents, and school administrators, which may impact your interactions with parents.

### TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

The *Education Act* outlines the various duties of a teacher – some of which intersect with parental expectations, such as encouraging pupils to learn, maintaining discipline and evaluating and reporting on the progress of pupils.

One of the gravest and most challenging responsibilities of a teacher, however, is your duty to report child abuse. This is also one of the greatest sources of potential conflict with a parent.

The Ontario *Child and Family Services Act* requires those who perform professional or official duties with respect to children to report suspected abuse where there are reasonable grounds. The report must be made to the local Children's Aid Society. A report to another teacher or the principal is not what the law requires.

The types of abuse that a teacher must report are physical, sexual, emotional, domestic violence, neglect, abandonment/separation, and caregiver incapacity.

You are advised to document the time and date of the report, as well as the observations or reports from students that caused you to make the report. This documentation might be useful should you be required to testify months later. Tell your principal that you reported the incident, as required by law.

It is likely that reporting suspected abuse will lead to tension with the parent(s) in question. Anonymity is not always assured in these reports. When asked by Children's Aid Society or police for contact information, you are advised to give the school's name, address, and telephone number. **Home information is not required.**

If you are confronted by the parent about your report, tell them that it is your legal duty.

### TEACHER RIGHTS

- Be informed of parental complaints (if board officials act on those complaints).
- Receive copies of letters from parents if they are placed in your personnel file.
- Have OECTA representation in any matter that is, or might be construed to be, disciplinary.
- Expect your employer to follow appropriate regulations, policies, procedures, and legislation.
- Request administration's assistance with curriculum, assessment, classroom management, and discipline.
- Request assistance from administration in all communications with parents.
- Be treated with respect and courtesy.

- Work in a safe environment, free from intimidation, bullying, and harassment.
- Give the school name, address, and telephone number if contact information is requested in relation to your reporting duties.

Your rights to a safe and inclusive work environment, free of bullying, harassment, and violence are enshrined in numerous policies and legislation, including the *Education Act*, *Safe Schools Act* and regulations, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and the Criminal Code of Canada.

## ADMINISTRATION RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensuring all members of the school community are treated with dignity and respect.
- Providing a safe workplace, which is free from bullying and harassment.
- Ensuring the board's code of conduct is enforced.
- Ensuring that the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* is enforced.
- Complying with applicable statutes, including the *Education Act*.
- Providing teachers with the appropriate supports and work environment so that they can do their jobs successfully.

Principals have a duty to prevent anyone whose presence would be detrimental to the physical and mental well-being of students from accessing the classroom. They can be empowered to direct people, including parents, to leave school property. They can also ask parents and others to respect and follow school behaviour codes and policies, and require parents to follow meeting restrictions, which may include specifying meeting times, locations, attendance, and agenda.

## PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents have the responsibility to abide by the law, behave in a civil and respectful manner, follow school and board rules and procedures, and adhere to the Provincial Code of Conduct.

There is no specific legislation that mandates or directs parents, or which gives special attention to parental rights. However, parents do have legitimately high expectations, which teachers should respect.

- Knowing what is being taught and how it will be taught.
- Knowing how learning will be evaluated and the evaluation and assessment criteria employed.
- Being fully informed of their child's progress, and alerted to problems if or when they arise.
- Upon request, and within the confines of any school policy, meeting with teachers regarding their child's progress and arranging with the teacher to visit the classroom.
- Knowing the approved discipline methods in a class and in the school. This includes the teacher's classroom expectations and the school's philosophy and expectations regarding discipline.

While it is usually more beneficial and productive for a parent to contact you, the teacher, they may contact the principal, trustee, or school board personnel directly.



# CHAPTER FIVE

## CONCLUSION

Being proactive and thoughtful around your communication with parents will help set the tone for a constructive parent-teacher relationship. Keeping in mind differing expectations, perspectives, and life experiences will help you understand parents' issues. Focusing on the facts rather than worrying about who is right or wrong will enable you to find a solution or pathway forward. While the vast majority of your interactions with parents will be positive, there will always be parents who are more difficult to deal with, and those who might be outright rude or abusive. Even in heated moments of a conflict, it is important to be measured in your responses and seek assistance as needed.

### REMEMBER TO:

- Establish a good communication protocol, which includes timely, clear and positive communications with parents.
- Carefully consider how and when you communicate with parents to ensure maximum impact of your message.
- Document all interactions and communications with parents.
- Take steps to understand the parent's perspective, don't force your perspective on them.
- Be an engaged and active listener.
- Discuss problems or concerns with parents and take responsibility for your own actions.
- Don't ignore issues.
- Focus on solutions, rather than on assigning blame.
- Be clear regarding your expectations of parents, and get clarity around their expectations of you.
- Speak to your school administration at the first sign of a potential problem.
- Get help when you need it when dealing with a difficult person.
- Alert the police if you feel threatened.



If you have questions or concerns, contact OECTA's Counselling and Member Services Department at 1-800-268-7230

# CHAPTER SIX

## RESOURCES

### OTHER OECTA PUBLICATIONS (AVAILABLE AT OECTA.ON.CA)

*Appropriate and Professional Use of Electronic Communication*

*Managing Stress and Promoting Wellness:*

*A guide for teachers on managing stress in the workplace and beyond*

*On Thin Ice: Maintaining Professional Boundaries*

*Parent Teacher Conferences*

*Reporting Abuse: Teachers and the Child and Family Services Act*

*Relationships: Appropriate and Professional*

### ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION RESOURCES

*Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools, Realizing the Promise of Diversity*

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf>

*Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*

[http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/pe\\_policy2010.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/pe_policy2010.pdf)

### WEB RESOURCES

Ontario Teachers' Federation Parent Engagement Website

<http://www.parentengagement.ca/>

### LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES

Most school boards have harassment policies and protocols. Here is one example:

Respecting Home and School Relationships, Hamilton–Wentworth Catholic District School Board

<http://www.hwcdsb.ca/board/policies/?fileID=140639>

### BOOKS

*An Educator's Guide to Parental Harassment*

Keel, Robert G. and Tymochenko, Nadya, Canada Law Book Inc., 2004.

*Inspiring the Future: A New Teacher's Guide to the Law*

Scarfo, Nick J. and Zuker, Marvin A., Carswell, 2011.

*Parent Engagement: Supporting Elementary and Secondary Teachers and Educators*

*Working with Parents and Guardians*

Ontario Teachers' Federation, 2015.

*Violence and Harassment in the Workplace: A Practical Guide to Ontario's Bill 168 for Employers, Unions and Employees*

Newman, Elaine, Lancaster's Q & A Series, 2012.

## LEGISLATION

*Child and Family Services Act*

[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90c11\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90c11_e.htm)

*Criminal Code of Canada*

<http://www.canlii.org/en/ca/laws/stat/rsc-1985-c-c-46/latest/rsc-1985-c-c-46.html>

*Education Act*

[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90e02\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90e02_e.htm)

*Occupational Health and Safety Act* <http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/>

*Ontario College of Teachers Act*

[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_96o12\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_96o12_e.htm)

*Ontario Human Rights Code*

[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90h19\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90h19_e.htm)

*Policy and Program Memorandum 128 – The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Boards Code of Conduct*

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/128.pdf>

*Teaching Profession Act*

[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90t02\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90t02_e.htm)

*Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*

[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_97w16\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_97w16_e.htm)



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