

Solving Problems at School



Parents sometimes need to talk to the teacher about schoolwork, their child's relationship with another student or their child's special needs. Most teachers are used to getting these kinds of calls from parents and want to help your child succeed in school.

Parents as partners in education

In Ontario, parents are encouraged to be key partners in their children's education. In fact, there is now a part of the Education Ministry that is dedicated to helping parents become involved in their children's education and school community.

But the system can sometimes be confusing or intimidating. Who should you talk to if you have a question or problem?

If you want to talk to the teacher on the phone, call the school office, leave a message and the teacher will call you back.

If you want to meet with the teacher, call the school office and leave a message that you want to make an appointment to meet with the teacher. If you think your child needs extra support or a special program, you can ask for a meeting with the teacher and other staff at the school. Some schools can provide interpreters.

Here are some tips for talking with the school staff:

Talk to your child

- Ask your child questions to help you gather information.
- Try using "open-ended questions" like, "What do you find difficult about ...?" "Tell me what happened..."
- Listen to what he or she says and ask more questions.

Talk to your child's teacher or the school's guidance counsellor

- Talk to the teacher about your concerns and how your child feels.
- Try using comments like "My child told me that..".
- Ask questions to help you understand school policies and procedures.
- Listen to the teacher's point of view and suggestions.

Talk about what you and the teacher will do so your child gets the same message from both of you.

- If your school has a guidance counselor, he or she can give you information about the rest of your child's courses and advice about how to solve social or educational problems.
- You can take time to think about what the teacher has said; you don't have to decide anything right away. Agree to talk again to see if the solution is working.

Talk to the principal or vice-principal

If the teacher is not able to help, speak with the principal or vice-principal. They may be able to help directly or involve other teachers or other staff at your school.

Talk to the school superintendent or your trustee

If the problem still isn't solved, you can contact the school superintendent or your school trustee for assistance. The school secretary or principal can tell you how to contact the superintendent or trustee or you can go to your school board's website to find the information.

Remember to:

- Be informed: Find out about your school's policies.



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- Attend all regular parent-teacher interviews and events. It is easier to solve problems if you and the teacher have already met.
- Attend any meetings about your child that the school invites you to. (e.g. special education, IEP, school discipline)
- If your problem can't be easily solved, keep written notes about important meetings and conversations.
- Ask for an interpreter if you are not comfortable expressing yourself in English.
- Concerns about our children can be upsetting. Try to stay calm. People are more likely to listen to your concerns if you express them calmly.

For more information:

- Call People for Education at 416-534-0100 or obtain copies of this tip sheet in other languages at: www.peopleforeducation.com
- Visit the Ministry of Education website at: www.edu.gov.on.ca
- Visit www.settlement.org/edguide for videos and information in many languages