

When conflicts *arise*

“Anything that’s **human** is *mentionable*, and anything that is mentionable can be *more manageable*.”

When we can **talk** about our feelings, they become *less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary*.

The *people we trust* with that **important talk** can help us **know** that *we are not alone*.”

—Mister Rogers

Conflict is a normal part of life. When conflicts arise at school, there are things you can do to improve the situation and open up communication.

1 Stay positive. Your words are the most powerful to your child and will shape their expectations. Even if you’re feeling negative toward an adult at the school, try not to let your child know that.

2 Listen carefully. In order to get the facts straight, ask your child open-ended questions, then follow up by asking for specific examples that tell you what you’re dealing with. Make notes about the issue with dates to help you notice patterns. Does your student just need to vent? Sharing with you may help put their feelings into words.

3 Brainstorm solutions together. Your child may have some ideas about what they, the teacher, or you can do to fix the problem. Soliciting your child’s input will show them that their thoughts are valued,

and forging a plan together may help them be more receptive to possible solutions.

4 Observe the situation. Get as much information as you can about the source of the conflict before scheduling a meeting with staff. Question other parents whose children are or were in the same situation for their input.

5 Open a dialogue. Ask, “How do you feel my child is doing?” Listen to the staff member’s assessment and suggestions before you express your concerns. Posing questions and avoiding accusations will yield the best results. Bring along a notepad with your notes, and to keep track of what responses you receive.

6 Build the connection. Volunteering time or keeping in regular contact with a teacher by phone, text, or email will help you understand each other and communicate better. When a teacher does make an extra effort with your child, reach out to show your appreciation.

7 If necessary, meet with the next person up the chain of command. If you feel the situation isn’t improving and you aren’t getting an adequate response from the teacher, request a meeting with a school leader. The principal may be able to explain the teacher’s approach and more objectively assess the situation. You can find out from the school’s website who the principal reports to.

8 Give it some time. Some changes take time to show up in a child’s achievement, but monitor your child to see if things are improving, staying the same, or getting worse.

9 Explore your options. Would a different teacher or classroom make a difference? Have you taken the issue to the top of this school and found no relief? Studies have shown that children who switch schools lose out on learning, so try to hold out until the end of the year.

*Adapted from Resolving a Conflict With Your Child’s Teacher.
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