

Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Jefferson County



The Challenges of Working with Parents

Presented by:

The New York State Parental Information &
Resource Center (PIRC) at Cornell Cooperative
Extension of Jefferson County

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New York State Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC)

Funded through the US Department of Education
Sponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County
In partnership with Jefferson-Lewis BOCES



We can provide technical assistance and ideas for programs and activities that strengthen family/school partnerships leading to improved student achievement.

Visit our website at www.nyspirc.org

New York State Parental Information & Resource Center



Workshop Topics

- What makes people/parents challenging to work with?
- Minimizing the potential for challenging interactions.
- Skills to use in conflict situations.
- Strategies for addressing and dealing with problems when they arise.



Research

One out of six teachers nationwide leaves the profession every year. Parent management is the top reason cited by almost half of those who leave.

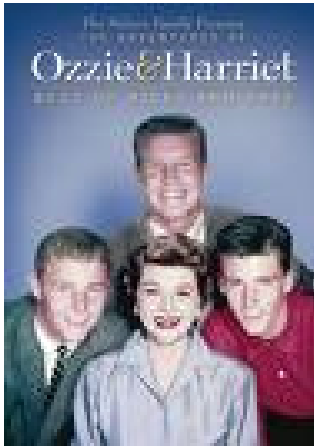
Harvard Graduate School of Education 2005

Possible Reasons

What are some possible reasons
why parents may be
behaving or reacting this way?



Times Have Changed



VS.



- * Nuclear family
- * Respect for authority
- * Children taught lessons about choices and consequences
- * Want the best for children

- * Many different family configurations
- * Questions authority
- * Parents mistake rescuing as love
- * Want the best for children



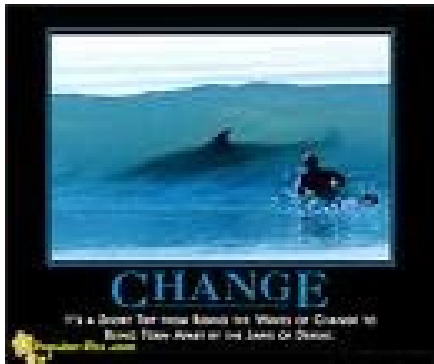
“How To Handle Difficult Parents”

by Suzanne Capek Tingley

- 1) Pinocchio’s Mom- my child would never lie
- 2) Caped Crusader- their ideas are the most important
- 3) Ms. “Quit Picking on My Kid”
- 4) The Intimidator-controlling parent
- 5) The Stealth Zapper- implies you are not worthy
- 6) The Uncivil Libertarian- their child has rights
- 7) No Show Dads- attendance is not important
- 8) Helicopter Mom-hovers over child
- 9) The Competitor- everything is a contest

Change

We may not be able to change parent behavior, but we can change our approach to working with difficult parents.





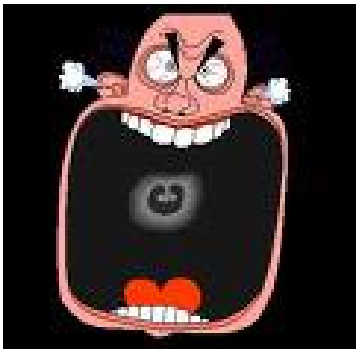
How Schools Make Parents Angry

- Fail to communicate
- Break promises
- Label children and families
- Become defensive
- Lack of respect
- Don't ask parents for guidance/ideas
- Automatically back teachers

What is Anger?



“Anger is an experience that occurs when a goal, value, or expectation that (parents) have chosen has been blocked or when (their) sense of personal worth is threatened.”



How to Handle Angry Parents

Learning how to defuse negative emotions of parents who have both real and imagined problems is a critical human relations skill.





Do's of Dealing with Challenging Parents

1. Do your homework before contacting parents.
2. Do communicate regularly.
3. Do keep administration informed.
4. Do listen and paraphrase.
5. Do think before you speak.
6. Do utilize parents' knowledge regarding their child.
7. Do know when it is time to end a conversation.



Don'ts of Dealing with Challenging Parents

1. Don't forget schools need parents help.
2. Don't use humor or sarcasm.
3. Don't be afraid to admit your mistakes.
4. Don't take criticism personally.
5. Don't argue or hang up.
6. Don't make promises you can't keep.



When You Have a Concern

- Discuss student issues in private.
- Begin the conversation with the positive.
- Be polite and don't talk down.
- Respect parent's point of view.
- Be clear and concise.
- **Stick with the facts!**



Steps to Solving Problems

1. State the issue and give an example.
2. Listen to the parents explanation and paraphrase.
3. Review the facts and brainstorm together.
4. Put an agreement in writing.



Tips for Teachers

- Be fair, honest, and respectful.
- Maintain eye contact and be aware of your own body language.
- Seek first to understand.. then to be understood.
- Don't accuse, place blame or pass judgment.
- Provide your school contact information to parents.
- Think ahead to be proactive rather than reactive.
- Remember, parents know their children best and really do want what is best for them.



Setting the Stage

- Create a welcoming environment.
- Know the parent's hopes and dreams.
- Be clear about your expectations.
- Communicate using a variety of methods.
- Have parenting resources available.



Resources

- “How to Deal with Parents Who Are Angry, Troubled, Afraid or Just Plain Crazy” by Elaine K. Mc Ewan
- “How to Handle Difficult Parents” by Suzanne Tingley
- “Dealing with Difficult Parents and Parents in Difficult Situations” by Todd Whitaker and Douglas Fiore
- www.nyspirc.org



Reflection

How will you use the information shared today to help you work more effectively with parents in your classroom and school?

Questions?

Thank you for attending!