

# When a Volunteer Needs to Talk to a Parent

Somewhere along the line, there will come a time when it may be necessary to talk with a parent about their child's behavior. The hope is that together you can come up with a plan that will smooth out the behavior. But you will want to tread lightly as some parents can be sensitive and may perceive this as criticism of them or their child. They may already receive plenty of feedback that is negative from others if the behaviors are showing up at home and elsewhere. Here are some pointers that you will want to keep in mind when talking with a parent.

1. Bring the Barnabas Floor Monitor into the situation to discuss the situation first. Then the two of you discuss with the parent.
2. Make prayer your first step. Ask God to help you with the right heart and words. Ask Him to prepare the heart of that parent so they can receive your words in the right spirit.
3. Always plan to talk with the parent when others are not around, even if you feel you know them well. This may be more sensitive for them than you realize. A phone call may even work later in the week.
4. Plan enough time so that the parent can ask as many questions as they need. There may not be many people they feel comfortable in discussing their child's behavior. If they are seeing similar behavior elsewhere they may feel frustrated about what to do. Give them the opportunity to share that frustration.
5. Always begin your remarks with something positive about their child. Ex. "I love having Johnny in my class and want to make this the best part of his week".
6. To make it personal helps the parent know you are interested. Ex. "I want your insight in how I can best help Johnny in the classroom".
7. Carefully and specifically tell them what you are seeing in the classroom.
8. Ask if they experience the same behavior at home or other places like school and whether there are things that have worked to change the behavior.
9. Ask them to help you come up with some strategies to try.
10. Finish on a positive note. Ex. "I look forward to trying these new ideas. Let's stay in touch and we'll turn this thing around"!
11. Be sure to let them know you look forward to seeing them again next week.

Remember that the parents are the experts on their child. They have probably tried all kinds of things – some have worked, others have not.

They deserve your respect. Remain calm, engaged and pleasant. They will be your best resource and their input will be valuable in solving the present situation as well as giving you insights into working with other children in the future.

KMA 10/2012