

Blaine Policy on Meeting with Administration

Policy:

If a parent would like to meet with the administration about a situation that involves a Blaine staff member (i.e. classroom teacher, lunchroom staff, security, nurse, office staff, after school personnel), the parent must discuss his or her concerns with the staff member first.

Policy Rationale:

I want to make it clear that our process has nothing to do with administration being "busy." We have an open door policy and members of our LSC, PTA, Friends of Blaine and other parents often take advantage of that open door by walking in to discuss *broader school issues*. Mr. Norcross, Mrs. Brito and I all welcome any opportunity we have to chat with parents, students and teachers about our school. However, when it comes to *concerns about particular classroom events, assignments, and/or issues that involve specific staff*, parents must take those concerns directly to the staff member. This policy is in place for two reasons:

1. I believe the most important relationship I can have with an adult in my own son's school is my relationship with his teacher. I believe the same is true for the parents, students, and teachers at Blaine. Taking an issue to a principal--before clarifying the nature of the facts with the teacher--squanders a golden opportunity for a parent to build and develop that parent-teacher relationship that is so critical for the success of the child.
2. In my five years at Blaine, I have had countless concerns brought to me from parents about teachers and other staff members. I have always redirected the parent to involved staff member, and rarely did the parents' understanding of the facts behind their concerns not change after that meeting. Even in my dealings with my own son's teacher I found that although my son's story was truthful, his perception of the facts was missing key events that changed the entire nature of my perception of what had occurred. His principal could not clarify those facts; his teacher, however, could and did.

As with any policy, extenuating circumstances may present themselves that call for administration to put the policy aside and become involved earlier in the process. In my five years at Blaine, this has occurred only twice.

In short, I encourage parents to meet with staff before bringing their concerns to administration in order to (1) foster strong relationship-building between the parent and teacher, and (2) ensure that all parties have a full and accurate understanding of the facts of the situation before proceeding.

Summary and Conclusion:

I know that such meetings can be awkward and uncomfortable at first--especially when the issue at hand involves a direct or indirect critique of a staff member's performance. However, we have found that the process works. My major ask is that parents go into the meeting trying to get an accurate understanding of what actually happened. Once the full picture has been laid out, I have found that Blaine parents and staff have been able to plan a path forward together. In a few rare instances, both parties could not come to terms, so I joined them in subsequent meetings to forge a path forward. This continues to be my practice. I hope that each of you in the larger Blaine community understand my approach and agree that it is designed with the best interests of your children in mind.

Respectfully,

Troy LaRaviere
Principal, Blaine Elementary School
Parent, Kellogg Elementary School