

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

Melba Wilderman PRINCIPAL

Last month we began another year of shared responsibility in building Christian values and educational skills in the young people God has placed in our care. This partnership between parents and school staff is the fundamental reason for the success of our students. Your ideas, your cooperation in helping within the school, and your support are greatly appreciated. Thus, communicating with each other is very important. How we communicate sends a powerful message to the other individual. It is important that all of us communicate in an effective manner. To that end, I offer the following suggestions as a means of better communication with the school office, your child's teacher, and myself.

OFFICE: If you must call the office, please identify yourself. Even though we recognize all families by sight, it is a little more difficult to recognize voices over the phone. We are always willing to recognize an error on our part and will do our best to correct those errors whenever possible. And be patient with us, with than one hundred families to keep track of, we do occasionally make mistakes.

CLASSROOM TEACHER: If you have a question about something you do not understand, or you would just like to touch base with your child's teacher, or you have a concern you wish to express concerning your child, the following suggestions may help you with this process.

1. Send a note, through your child, or an email to the classroom teacher asking for an appointment. It is often helpful to list days and times that are good for you so that the teacher has those when looking at her schedule.
2. It is also possible to call the office and leave this same message. We will get that information to the teacher as soon as possible. Please remember that the teacher is probably in the classroom when you call. Free time is at a premium, but they will get back to you at the first possible moment when they can talk uninterrupted.
3. It is important for you to remember that "stopping by their classroom" in the morning when school starts, on your lunch hour, or at dismissal, is not a good idea. The teacher may be preparing for class or busy with the children and it is not a good time to interrupt. As we all know, when we are caught off-guard, we often haven't had the time to think through our response. It is important that all of us have that opportunity to communicate effectively.
4. Please make sure that you always go to the teacher FIRST! Our staff here at St. Joe is very good at communicating with me about your child, whether it is a concern or just general conversations about the classroom. If there is a difficulty that can't be resolved with the classroom teacher, or the teachers believe I need to be involved, then I will become involved.
5. Above all, please be respectful of your child, the teacher, other children, or other parents. Becoming involved in parking lot gossip sessions is not very helpful, nor is it helpful to simply take in what others have to say as the whole truth. Remember that there is always more than one side to every situation, and that often others have not given you all of the details. Collecting your information simply from gossip sessions and the unfiltered opinions of others and then approaching the staff with this "ammunition" is a good way to put others on the defensive and is sure to stifle effective communication.
6. Think about having your child involved in conferences when appropriate. Children are open to parents, teachers, and themselves working as a team.
7. Please do not call teachers at home in the evening unless they have indicated that it would be acceptable to do so. The teaching staff is usually here by 7:00 a.m. each day and stay until 3:00 or 4:00 p.m. (or later). We will get a message to staff members if you call and they aren't available; your calls will be returned as soon as possible.

PRINCIPAL: Please know that I am always happy to sit down and to talk with parents, teachers, and children about anything. All I ask is that you respect my very busy schedule. I am often out in the classrooms, at meetings, or busy with one of those endless reports they give principals. Mornings are especially busy with duties, announcements, and often it is the only time for me to check in with the teachers. Please call, email, or send a note. I will get back to you as soon as possible and at a time when we will not be interrupted.

I am here to help all of you in our common goal of sharing the responsibility of providing the best Catholic education possible for our children. By following these simple suggestions, I believe that all of us will be taking that first step in being effective.