



Growing Classroom Culture through Parent Partnerships with Robyn Burlew

Lecture 6: Working
through
Disagreements
between the Partners

Outline:

Working through Disagreements between Partners

- Normalize conflict. Don't assume that you won't have any conflicts.
- During peacetime, establish basic principles for how you will move through conflict.
- Set up pathways for communication with the right person.
- There is a difference between an offense and something that needs to be brought to someone's attention.
- There are times when the school helps two sets of parents to navigate a situation.
- Whenever there is a disagreement or concern, we need to be careful of our language.
 - **Words of life** are, "Help me to understand."
 - **Words of death** are, "Why did you do...?"

Email Guidelines

- Emails are a blessing and a curse.
- Keep them short.
- Have a second set of eyes on your emails, if it has any sort of emotion in it. Ensure that it doesn't carry the wrong tone.
- When answering a long email from a parent, your response ought to be short and it primarily ought to be an invitation to get together in person or on the phone.
- Do not send a boy to do a man's job.
- As you are talking with parents during peacetime, you should encourage them to send short emails also.
- Continue to talk about the 90% of the shared, agreed upon goals, and the 10% that we have to give and take with one another.
 - Policies are in place to protect people.
 - We want our policies to be in place to help us stay the course in our school mission and culture in ways that protect from people's whims.



Peacemakers

- There are policies, processes, and personal.
- Even if there is a policy in place, we must still go through a process of conversation, and we still must treat the people involved in ways that we ourselves would want to be treated.
- In conflicts, in the end a wounded partnership is not because of the policy, it is because of the way that people were treated along the way.
- Pray about difficult meetings. Get advice from an administrator.
- Sometimes you need an agenda for a difficult meeting. Open in prayer, read scripture, commit to the partnership, parents speak about the concerns, and then the teacher will recount the situation as they saw it in the classroom.
- We want to restate shared goals and remind everyone of why we want the same things.
- Own the part of the situation that is your responsibility early in the meeting and apologize early on. When honest apologies are made, and the tone changes, then even if you still disagree at the end, your partnership is still intact.
- Don't feel like you have to defend yourself at every turn. It is healthy to listen.
- Don't assume that you have to give immediate answer. "Life is not a game show, you do not need the correct answer in 30 seconds."
- If you come to a place where you are about to sin with your own tongue, end the meeting even if you do so abruptly. That is better than lashing out with your own tongue.