

**Mrs. Hebel's Top Ten Tips**  
**For Better Communication With Your Child's Teacher**

1. Wait until you are calm. Often our children come home with a report that makes us see red. The nice thing is, that the problem (if it is real) isn't going anywhere so we can wait a few hours or even a day or two before calling. A calm person is more likely to really solve the problem and be respected by the teacher.
2. Go in with a "Let Me Listen" attitude. Instead of taking a "You Listen To Me" approach, try to hear the teacher out. Children often misunderstand or distort (whether intentionally or not) a situation. Give the teacher a chance to tell you the adult version before passing judgment.
3. Be a problem solver – not a prosecutor. Teachers have feelings too. The more we attack, the more defensive they become. If the objective is to solve the problem stick to that. State the problem clearly and ask the teacher what can be done rather than tell her what to do. When two heads are put together in partnership, you get better results.
4. Use the proper channels to contact the teacher. Call the teacher's school voicemail box – only call her at home she has clearly offered that to you. Very often we see teachers in the parking lot, hallways, at school or in stores. Don't talk there. The teacher is entitled to a private life and is unlikely to give you her full attention and may even be resentful. Leave a detailed message for her and she will call you at a time that she can devote her full attention to you.
5. Establish the fact that there is really a problem before you call. Sometimes our children come home and tell us something that alarms us with regard to curriculum, homework or classroom management. While our initial reaction might be to run to the phone– wait. See if it happens again. A one time problem may correct itself as frequently the teacher sees the problem too. If it recurs and you see a pattern emerging, it is time to call.
6. Don't let problems get out of hand. Just like we should not run to call too quickly, we should not drag our feet either. Once you have established that there may be a problem or you are getting the same uncomfortable feeling again, call the teacher and don't allow things to escalate. With good communication a problem can be solved in its initial stages and a lot of aggravation and needless frustration can be avoided.
7. Be forgiving – anyone can make a mistake. Teachers are as human as parents and they make mistakes sometimes just like we do. As long as the problem is rectified, let it go. Very often the teacher feels as bad about what happened as you and your child do.
8. Call the teacher first. Whenever possible, call the teacher directly instead of calling the principal. Just like you wouldn't want someone at work to "tattle" on you, teachers don't want that either. Calling the teacher directly sends a message "I respect you. I have faith that we can resolve these issues together." In the long run everyone is served best with this approach.
9. Speak positively in front of your children. No matter what your concern is, speak with respect about the teacher to your child at all times. Even if the teacher is really crummy, you only make the problem worse by speaking negatively. When the problem is resolved, your child will still not respect the teacher. This will make the child incapable of learning in that teacher's class and foster disrespect in your child – neither of which are your real objectives.
10. Call me anytime. Principals are a great resource for mediating when communication with the teacher isn't going as smoothly as we'd like or for when the teacher can't help with a particular issue. I check my voicemail every weekday and try to call back within 24 hours. Stop by school or call to say "hello." Why wait for a problem???