

## More Things That Hurt Our Ears:

1. "He/she doesn't act this way at home."
2. "His/her teacher last year didn't make the students do that."
3. "My child is acting up because he/she is bored."
4. "My son/daughter said you pick on him/her."
5. "My child would never lie, I think you're the liar!"
6. "We're going on vacation for a week. Can you put together a packet of work for my son/daughter so he/she doesn't fall behind?"
7. "I tried what you are suggesting. It doesn't work."
8. "The homework you give is too difficult for my child. Other parents agree with me."
9. "Your class isn't always challenging enough for my child."
10. "My child has had many after school activities, so he/she couldn't finish his/her homework."
11. "I told my son that if someone hits him, he has my permission to hit them back!"
12. "I expect you to call me every day to give me an update on his/her progress."

## Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Parents

### **1. Be sensitive and practical in responding to a parent's request for a meeting.**

- Follow the "12/24" rule!
- Take into account the work schedule of the parent.
- Through communication that is **heavy on courtesy**, try to give the parent multiple options for scheduling.  
(e.g. present several days, before/after school, etc.)
- Use email carefully when responding to sensitive situations.
- Unless there is a reason for delay, try to schedule the meeting within a reasonable time, not to exceed a week.
- Agree on a time that will allow issues to be discussed adequately without a hurried or rushed feeling on your part or theirs.

### **2. Be attentive to the atmospherics of the meeting.**

- Try to get the parent out of a "public" area (e.g. playground, hallway, drop off/ pick up area).
- Try to get the parent to sit down. If the parent won't sit down, you should.
- Never meet with a parent from "across your desk."
- If you have reason to believe that the parent may be quick tempered or even violent, schedule the meeting somewhere close to the office or have the principal and/or a colleague sit with you during the meeting.

### **3. Earnestly and actively listen to the parent.**

- Do not interrupt, fight the urge to do so.
- Pause to summarize/clarify each part of the discussion
- Take notes, invite the parent to take notes.
- If necessary, gently remind parents of school and classroom rules and expectations, including parent handbooks.

### **4. Avoid behaviors that exacerbate the situation and create barriers between you and the parent.**

- Never engage in the "been there, done that" or the "I've heard it all before" syndrome.
- Never immediately recourse to authority or expertise