

Classroom insecurities are not to be shared with parents.

A school is also an *economy* and *parents are consumers*. Strong economies rely on *consumer confidence*. One goal of a parent meeting is to instill confidence in the learning environment, the school, and your teaching abilities. It is *counterproductive* and *harmful* to speak with parents about our insecurities on the classroom environment or other students in the class. Teachers may share insecurities with parents in order to justify their actions or in order to elicit sympathy from the parent. However, rather than having a relationship building effect, the opposite occurs. These statements undermine the confidence in the teacher, the school, and the education environment.

"I have a lot of challenges with behavior in my class."

- YOU WANT...the parent to understand why we are off pace in the classroom. It's not my fault.
- The PARENT HEARS: OMG! I'm sending my kid to a school with bad kids and a teacher who has no classroom management.

"My class is really low, and I have lots of students below grade level."

- YOU WANT...the parent to understand why you are working on lower level remedial skills in the class.
- PARENT HEARS: OMG! I'm sending my precious gem to a school with dumb kids. He's going to fall behind (even if between you and I, we know he is at the lowest level in the class)

"There are too many kids for me to work with Johnny one-on-one."

- YOU WANT...the parent to understand that you are working really, really hard! (which you are) and that you have a lot of kids in the classroom.
- PARENT HEARS: OMG! The school and teacher are completely overwhelmed and unable to help my child. 18 kids!! There are too many kids in the classroom!! How can any teacher teach 18 kids (even though we normal class sizes in most industrial countries range from 20-30 kids per class).

"English Language Arts is not my strong suit. I'm better at teaching Math and Science."

- YOU WANT...the parent to understand why we haven't done as much Language Arts as Science and Math.
- PARENT HEARS: OMG! The school and the teacher are in conflict. The teacher doesn't want to teach Language Arts! My kid will never learn Language Arts.

To better understand this concept. Imagine a chef in a restaurant. Usually, chefs do not invite customers back into the kitchen. Why? It can be loud, messy, chaotic. He is sweating from the steam of the cookers. It looks bad. He is exhausted because he needs to get the food out in a timely manner. It sounds challenging. However, all the *consumer* sees is the *restaurant*. They do not enter into the kitchen nor do they know what goes on back there. Instead, they receive the final product, a beautiful plate of tasty food. Could you imagine if the chef invited customers into the kitchen and expressed her/his concerns? "It's too hot back here from the steam of the cookers!" "We have too many customers!" No one would want to come to such a restaurant.

Every healthy teacher has insecurities or challenges. Expressing them is very important. However, it must be kept in house and expressed in a productive manor. For example, you could arrange a meeting with administration to talk about your challenges OR you research what other teachers in similar challenges do to solve these challenges.

Building confidence is important. This should be a central goal of every parent/teacher meeting. Rather, than focusing on the conditions of the kitchen with your parents, focus your conversation with them on the beautiful plate of food you've created. This is why having educational **products** to demonstrate quality is so important. Products are student created work that demonstrate mastery of rigorous skills. **An example of a product could be a book report, a writing journal tracking student progress, an essay, an art project, a student created poster board, and many others.**

Tips to instill confidence with teachers

1. If you need to express concerns to a parent, make your concerns specific to **their** child.
2. Expression of concerns should be *specific* rather than *general*. (I.e. he threw a spit ball yesterday on Johnny rather than he disrupts everyone around him) Words matter in instilling confidence. Instead of saying your child "never listens in class", say he has "challenges" focusing and describe specific examples.
3. Speak positive words about your class and the education environment (in the inverse, *do not* make general statements on the academic level or behavior of other children unless it is **positive**.)