

August 2015

In a few days, we will begin another school year. This will begin my 24th year in education and my 4th year as your Superintendent of Schools. During the summer months, I always try to take some time to reflect on changes that have occurred in education as well as the things that have remained constant in my profession. One thing that has remained constant in education is an occasional conflict between parents and school officials may arise. Resolving those conflicts are one of the roles we as educators play in the process of helping children grow.

Normally, the conflict originates from either a lack of communication or the occasional mis-communication. Because of this, a simple discussion can normally resolve the issue and provide a greater understanding. This is why if you are the parent, it is best to open the dialogue with your child's teacher BEFORE communication breakdowns occur. A simple action such as this lets the teacher know you care about your child's intellectual growth and are interested in assisting. Then, if a breakdown occurs, the relationship between the parent and the teacher has already begun in a positive light and it will be easier to resolve any differences that might occur.

I've had many instances in my career when a parent approached me to discuss an issue regarding their child. My response has remained consistent, "Have you visited with the teacher?" Did you notice this process didn't involve a call or conversation with the Principal, Superintendent or a member of the Board of Education? It also doesn't involve a post on social media soliciting opinions about something without the entire array of facts. Nothing brings out more passion from parents than an issue with their child. Parents might be afraid that a teacher would "take it out on my child." That is precisely the reason to establish a relationship with the teacher prior to any communication breakdown or conflict. Parents, teachers and children are human and positive relationships generally bring about greater understanding of each other.

While I was an Athletic Director, I attended an initial meeting between a coach and parents of the student-athletes the coach would have under his care for the upcoming season. The coach said, "I would ask you to not believe everything your child says about me when they come home and I won't believe everything they tell me about you at practice." I found the statement humorous and also true. Occasionally, the facts can become "clouded" between the schoolhouse and home. This is why it is usually best to check the facts before reaching conclusions.

For children to reach their maximum potential, schools and parents must work together. The time for that to commence is before a problem arises. One of the things I love about my job is the fresh start that occurs every year. Being a supportive parent is not an easy task but the continued effort reaps many benefits for our future. Don't be afraid to start the dialogue with your child's teacher, it may make all of the difference in how your child fares in this upcoming school year. I wish us nothing but the best for the upcoming school year. GO JAYS!!!