

When Teachers Fear Parents the Child Loses

By Shawnta S. Barnes – October 25, 2017



In Pittsburgh, a parent followed a teacher in a vehicle and attacked her with a brick at an intersection because the teacher confiscated her daughter's cell phone, an item prohibited by the school. Although this is an extreme and disturbing case, enraged parents can strike fear in teachers and make them feel unsafe.

I have had two incidents during my career where a parent made me feel unsafe. One time a parent drove his job issued vehicle to the school, slipped past the front office, entered my room and began yelling at me about his daughter's grade in my class. My desk was in the corner and he stood in front of it and I could not get around him. The dad demanded a grade change or else. My colleague across the hall rushed in, but the parent wouldn't get out of my face or leave. After the principal came, the parent finally left.

At another school, a parent slipped by the front office staff, made her way to my room and hurled threats at me about how I was going to be sorry for stealing her son's jacket. I informed the parent I didn't confiscate her son's jacket. After administration escorted this parent away, she was shown video of the passing period before he entered my class where he wasn't wearing a jacket. At both of my previous schools, after the incident, the parents were restricted from entering classrooms.

I'm a parent and I get it. You feel the teacher has wronged your child and you are angry. I've been there, but I also know I have to think about how my actions will affect my relationship with my child's teacher and how my actions might change the relationship between the teacher and my child. Just like all human beings, teachers make mistakes and can be wrong. Whether the teacher is right or wrong, parents need to keep their cool in order to work towards a solution. Parents are teachers partners in education. Certain actions could cause a parent to lose access to the school and the person who gets hurt most is the child.

If you are a parent and you are angry at your child's teacher, think before you act. Talk about what happened with someone else and take time to consider what actions you would like to pursue before you take them. Remember, you are in a relationship with your child's teacher for the rest of the school year and a poor relationship between you and your child's teacher could affect your child's emotional and academic growth that school year. Don't let one moment of anger fracture your relationship with your child's teacher or like the Pittsburgh parent, land you in jail.