



# What can parents do when there are problems at school?

When problems arise at school, too often parents don't know how to constructively resolve them. Knowing how will make life easier for parents and school more productive for their children.

The Jefferson County Education Association (JCEA) believes that schools work best when parents and teachers work together. That shouldn't change just because a problem arises. Children learn by our example, so we have a special responsibility to demonstrate how problems can be constructively resolved.

For most parents, the key is knowing how to approach the problem and who to talk to first.

• **If the problem is concerning a specific teacher or a child's performance in a specific grade, JCEA suggests the following steps.**

**First:** Always discuss the issue with your child's teacher first. You can request a conference and/or communicate your concerns over the phone. What's important is that both you and the teacher have an opportunity to piece together the necessary information to try to resolve the problem.

**Second:** If the problem is not resolved to your satisfaction, the next step is to contact your school principal, who has a professional and contractual obligation to try to resolve issues which may arise between teachers and parents. When you contact him/her, identify the problem or concern and explain that you have already discussed the situation with the teacher. The principal will then make every effort to get all parties together to resolve the problem.

**Third:** If you are not satisfied with the principal's response, the next step is to discuss the situation with his/her supervisor—the area administrator—assigned to administer the attendance area of the high school your child attends or would attend. If you not sure who that is, ask your principal or call school district information (982-6500). When you contact the area administrator, let him/her know you have already talked with the teacher and principal but have been unable to resolve the problem.

**Fourth:** If you still are not satisfied with the response you have received, you may address your concern to the

superintendent, which is the last administrative level of appeal. Again, be sure you explain to the superintendent that you have tried to resolve the problem through all existing channels.

• **If you are dissatisfied with the superintendent's response or if your concern is about school district policy or program, you may discuss the issue with a member of the Jeffco school board.**

The Jeffco school board establishes educational policies and programs for Jefferson County. Every citizen in Jeffco lives in one of five school board districts. If you wish to pursue your concern with the school board, you should contact your district representative on the school board. If you don't know who that is, call the school district (982-6500) and ask for information.

• **If you have a complaint regarding teaching or library materials, activities or presentation, the District has established a specific procedure to follow:**

**First:** The principal will hold a conference with you—the complainant. Every effort will be made to resolve the problem by involving the teacher(s) in the conference whenever possible.

**Second:** If the complainant is dissatisfied with the conference and the concern deals with instructional materials, the principal will provide him/her a form called "Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Materials." The request will then be considered by a review subcommittee of the district's Curriculum Committee. The principal will forward the request and will include a written report of the original conference.

**Third:** After review, a written recommendation will be forwarded to the Superintendent. Copies will be provided to all participants.

**Fourth:** If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, he/she may appeal directly to the school board.

**Most problems—no matter how difficult—can be resolved if people treat each other with dignity and respect. It may seem that the appeals process is long, but this is necessary to assure that all parties are heard and treated fairly. It is JCEA's hope that throughout the process the bottom line should always be what is best for the child and education in Jefferson County.**