

9

Their Own Notes to Parents

A Point to Ponder



A little psychology goes a long way! For years, teachers have struggled with writing the dreaded “your child is misbehaving in my class” notes to parents. Usually the note expresses exactly what the child is or is not doing in class or what the child has done to someone else. This type of note sometimes gets “lost” in transportation or often lost in translation.

Dear Parent

Your child did something awful today while he was in my room
I hate to have to write this note, so filled with doom and gloom
But I must send it to you because I thought you'd like to know
And I'm hoping you can talk to him and punish him harshly—So
that he begins behaving now and causes me less trouble
If we don't nip this in the bud, the trouble may soon double!

Dear Teacher

I got your note and spoke to my son who said he did not do it
He says no matter what he does, somehow you misconstrue it
So behavior needs to change, all right, that behavior being your own
We'll expect that you apologize in order to atone!

Does the above interaction sound way too familiar? If so, we have a solution!

Classroom Solution/Strategy



Announce to your students that you will no longer write notes to their parents if they misbehave. This announcement will most likely be met with cheers and sighs of relief. Tell them, “Instead, *you* will write the notes. You are old enough and mature enough now, and I’m sure you would rather write that type of note yourself than to have me write it.” Be cautious not to say this in a sarcastic tone, but rather act as if you are doing a favor for them. That’s it.

Now, **the next time a student does something inappropriate and you want to let the parents know, have the student write the note.** Let’s say that Susan calls Monique a “bad” word, and this has become somewhat of a habit for Susan. Simply say to Susan, “I know that you realize that your parents need to know about this, so go ahead and write a note to them telling them what happened.” Tell her it’s okay to write the “bad” word in the note. So Susan reluctantly begins writing:

Dear Mom and Dad, In class today, I called Monique a _____.* Love, Susan Teacher signature: _____ Parent signature: _____
--

*We’re sure you can use your imagination to fill in the blank.

You, of course, sign it, and then you send the note home with Susan, telling her to return it the next day. You may be amazed to learn that you will never again have a parent contact you saying his child did not commit the act in question. That’s because the child actually admitted it in her own handwriting. The note comes from the child, not from you. This, to parents, is much less threatening and usually more believable.

But what if Susan comes to school the next day and claims to have “forgotten” to give the note to her parents? There’s a simple answer to that one also. You just make a phone call, with Susan right next to you, saying, “Mrs. _____, this is _____, Susan’s teacher. Susan had a note to give you yesterday, and she forgot to give it to you. Instead of bothering her with bringing it home again, I’ll just let her tell you what was in the note. Here’s Susan!” And you hand the phone to Susan. This technique works like a

charm. And usually students only have to experience this once before their behavior miraculously improves.

Bottom Line



When a child clearly “admits,” in her own words and in her own handwriting, to something she did, you escape being “accused” of over-reacting or falsely accusing the child of something she did not do or making a big deal out of nothing. Have students write their own notes to their parents!

If a child writes her own note to her mom or to her dad,
Admitting in her own words that she did something bad
Her parents will believe it, and although they may be mad
Behavior might improve even more than just a tad!