



Teachers, If You are Big and Bad Enough to Write Up My Child, Be Big and Bad Enough to Let Me Know

By Educator Barnes – February 29, 2020

Can I tell you a secret? Educators' kids get into trouble at school sometimes. You would think that because their parents live and breathe school each day that these children would be model citizens at school. Unfortunately, I, an educator, have to report that my children have had behavior issues at school.

When a teacher contacts me about either one of my sons' behavior, my husband and I take it seriously. We talk to our children and issue consequences, and we follow up with the teacher. This is the ideal. Student behavior cannot improve unless the child, teacher, and parents work together as a team.

However, it is hard to work together as a team to reach the common goal of acceptable behavior when the parent is kept out of the loop. Did you know that you can request your child's discipline file whenever you wanted it? Parents, if you have not, I encourage you to do so. When my husband and I did that, we discovered that our children had multiple referrals. They both had weeks where they had received multiple referrals during one week and one had days where he had received multiple referrals in a day.

Here's my problem. If you are going to sit down at your computer and take the time to submit a referral, the least you could do is email me and inform me of the referral and what you wrote. Or even better, you could pick up the phone and call me. If I'm really being honest with you, since I have already shared the secret that my sons are not perfectly behaved at school. Let me share another secret since this my 14th year as an educator.

You are not supposed to write a referral without contacting the parents. I have not worked in any school where teachers were allowed to write children up and not inform the parents. In one middle school where I worked, the administration would not process the referral unless you included the day and time that you contacted parents on the referral when you submitted it. The admin said, "Don't bother turning in that referral because I'm going to kick it back to you."

Let me add this detail and get more specific. The teacher who wrote the referral should contact the parents directly, not another colleague or the administration. If you are going to be big and bad enough to write up my child, contact me and let me know. Don't be a coward and hide behind a computer steadily writing up my child. Trust and believe that I will keep submitting record requests for my children. You won't be able to skate by, not on my watch.

If you are a parent, what can you do if the teacher won't tell you what is going on? First, request your child's discipline record. You can ask specifically for referrals. You can also ask to see what is in your child's cumulative folder. This is not a local or school by school decision. This is federal law. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that allows parents to make these requests, so exercise your rights!

Next, contact the teacher directly and tell him or her to contact you moving forward if there are any further referrals written. You could also choose to meet with the teacher to discuss the referrals that were written that you did not know about until you requested the records. Last, let the teacher know if he or she fails to do this, you will exercise your right to speak to the administration. Just because the teacher wants to avoid you, does not mean you should

do the same; be direct with the teacher. I have found that most teachers change their ways once they know you are not here to play and will follow up.

Do you know who else changes their ways when parents get involved? The students. If I am a student and I know you are too scared to contact my mom and dad, then what motivation do I have to change my behavior? What tools, tips, and strategies are the teachers missing out on because they don't want to do the job and contact the parents. If we are all going to be in this together, for the sake of our students, teachers stop writing up students without parental knowledge.