

# Five Tips for Dealing with Difficult Parents

*Editor's Note: Instead of a traditional column for this issue, we wanted to share some great advice from Ken Schutz, our AWSP President for 2018-19. The tips come from Ken's Fast Five video. Make sure you're subscribed to our YouTube channel so you never miss any great content from us.*

## **Ken Schutz**

Principal, Joel E Ferris High,  
Spokane PS

### **1) SAY THANKS.**

Thank parents for their communication. If it's via email or in person or a telephone call, make sure you thank them for their communication and also thank them for caring about the kid. That alone can turn around the situation.

### **2) LISTEN INTENTLY.**

Some parents just need to vent.

### **3) CONNECT PARENTS WITH STAFF.**

If it's a complaint regarding a staff member, make sure to talk to them about it. That's so important in your trust with staff. Also, take your time. Dealing with difficult parents may take some time for you to investigate, and you might have some decisions to make. Tell parents you're going to get back to them, and get back to them when you tell them you're going to get back to them.

### **4) CONNECT WITH THE STUDENT.**

Sometimes the student has a completely different version of the story than their parents. Make sure you talk with them to find out what the real issues are.



### **5) AGREE TO DISAGREE.**

Finally, if you've done everything possible to try to please this parent, agree to disagree. Sometimes that just happens, and if it does, please loop in your supervisor and central office people. Let them know a phone call or communication might be coming, and let them know the circumstances. They'll definitely appreciate it.

All these tips can help you with dealing with difficult parents. ■

Do you have any other tips for dealing with conflict or difficult parents? We'd love to hear about them. Send them our way. Email [webmaster@awsp.org](mailto:webmaster@awsp.org).



Ken Schutz is principal of Joel E Ferris High in Spokane Public Schools and is serving as AWSP president for the 2018-19 school year.