

Sample Script for Phone Call to Parent: Difficult News

This script is most appropriate if you're calling a parent with difficult news.

If at all possible, try to come to a preliminary agreement with the parent on a specific time to place this call. You can try to do this through the child or by calling just to set up a convenient time.

Hello, this is _____, your son's/daughter's principal. How are you? If you remember, we agreed that I'd call you at this time. Is it still convenient?

[Or if you have not set up a phone appointment, "I hope I'm not calling at an inconvenient time."]

[Pause here to give the parent a chance to say yes or no. If it is inconvenient, ask for a convenient alternative, and call back then. This also might be a good point to ask whether the parent speaks English adequately enough to have this conversation with you or whether a translator is needed.]

I'd like to discuss _____ with you briefly. I promise I won't take more than fifteen minutes of your time.

[Be sure to only take fifteen minutes. Quickly focus on the topic at hand. Make the points you need to make right away without too much elaboration and stick to the facts as simply stated as possible. It's best to make them all before engaging in any discussion with the parent, particularly if what you're calling about is bad news. If the parent really wants to discuss point-by-point, however, let him or her do it; you need to control the discussion, but not at the expense of courtesy or good parent-school relations.]

I hope I've been clear. Is there anything you don't understand or that you'd like me to explain further?

[Let the parent say what he or she is going to say completely before you respond (if there is a response to be made). You don't want to get into a point-by-point debate.]

I understand; let's talk about how we can handle the situation.

[Make sure you listen carefully. A parent usually is your best source for good options about what to do. However, sometimes parents' suggestions are either impractical or would involve something you can't or don't want to do—corporal punishment, for example.]

Thank you for your advice and cooperation. I'm sure between school and home we can make sure this situation is resolved, and we both can get _____ back on track doing well in school. Good-bye.