

# DO IT YOURSELF!



How to Help Your  
Elementary Child  
Advocate for Themselves

# BACKGROUND

## □ About Me

- Mom of Three
- Current President of the PAC

## □ Why This Topic

- Support does not mean helicopter, we need to learn the difference.
- GT kids tend to have social-emotional struggles in addition to academic challenges.
- The earlier we can help kids learn to communicate effectively, the better off they will be long term.



# HOW TO START AT HOME

- Model good communication when you have opportunities
  - When there is a dispute between family members, show them how they can discuss problems without escalation. This includes disputes between adults.
- Help them figure out their feelings
  - How does something impact them?
  - What are they worried about?
  - What is their best/worst case scenario?
- It is always better for kids to focus on their feelings as opposed to their perceived injustice
  - Better to say, “I feel frustrated” than “You did something that wasn’t fair!”



# PARENT PROBLEM OR KID PROBLEM

- Short Term Problems are Kid Problems
  - Homework questions
  - Confusion about a topic
  - Question about a specific grade
  - Technical difficulties
- Long Term Problems or System Issues are Parent Problems
  - Declining homework
  - Chronic grading issues
  - Long term communication issues
  - Concerns related to school operation generally



# THE LITTLE ONES- K TO GRADE 2

- Basic Principles to Start Applying Now
  - Encourage them to express their feelings
    - I feel statements are the fastest way for them to make their needs clear
  - Help them learn that we communicate with different people in different ways
    - How we talk to family is different than how we talk to teachers
    - They need to be calm and not yell
    - They need to address their assigned adults appropriately
  - Make sure they understand that if they are polite, they can make progress by saying things like,
    - I'm bored
    - This is too easy for me
    - Is there something else I can do



# THE LESS LITTLE ONES- GRADES 3 & UP

- Everything the little kids can do, the big kids should do
- By grade 2/3, kids should be able to handle day to day issues on their own
- Timing
  - Can this wait until after class, or is it an immediate need?
- The Communication Itself
  - Kids should be polite and specific. Don't say, "I don't understand the homework." Specificity means being clear, "In question 5, I don't understand what you are looking for."
  - Encourage them to say what they want. I'm not getting what I need, and this is what I think would help.
- Make it 100% clear to them that if they are unable to get resolution, you will help them.



# CONCLUSION

- Teaching kids to communicate now will serve them throughout their lives.
- Successful communication makes them seem responsible, invested, and capable.
- Some teachers are more responsive to kids.
- The expectation for communication is low at the elementary level. It is the perfect time for them to practice and get stronger before the stakes escalate.
- When they successfully communicate with an adult, and it works, it gives them confidence that will make them more willing to advocate for themselves in the future.

