

Speaking of Safety: A Conversation Guide for Parents

6 Tips for Successful, Respectful, and Productive Conversations with School Leaders

For parents, navigating conversations about school safety can feel overwhelming. Approaching these discussions thoughtfully can build trust, foster collaboration, and ensure that safety initiatives are effective for every student. Read more for practical tips and insights from school safety experts to help parents engage in constructive, informed, and impactful dialogue with school leaders.

We can shape safe and supportive learning environments – together!

1

Start with Partnership, Not Pressure

Approach the conversation as a collaboration. Frame your concern as a shared goal — keeping all students safe — rather than a criticism of current policies.



“Let's define our shared goal, and let's begin to build strategy around that shared goal together.”

– Michele Gay, Safe and Sound Schools

2

Do Your Homework

Find what information is already available for parents. Check your school's website, code of conduct, district policies, and emergency procedures before the meeting. Understanding what already exists helps you ask informed questions.



“There's a lot of good information and organizations out there. Do your homework, and don't just do it on the tech — do it on the culture [of your school and community]. Research different disciplines [and the guidance of] thought leaders.”

– Tom McDermott, CEIA-USA

3

Focus on Facts

Avoid leading with fear or rumor. Bring specific examples, research, or community observations, and ask what steps are being taken to address those issues.

4

Keep it Calm, Constructive, and Conversational

The tone you set matters. Demonstrating calm concern and cooperation helps leaders listen and respond more effectively.

You can encourage dialogue, not defensiveness, with questions like:

- ☒ “How does the school handle reunification following an emergency?”
- ☒ “What supports are available for students after a crisis?”

5

Learn Who’s Responsible

Identify who oversees safety (e.g., principal, district safety coordinator, school resource officer) and how parents can stay informed or get involved.

6

Stay Informed

Ask how families are notified in emergencies and how often contact information is updated. Learn what to expect and how to best respond to protect student safety.

Remember

The goal is collaboration, not confrontation. When parents and school leaders communicate with respect, clarity, and empathy, real safety improvements can happen. These conversations, when done thoughtfully, can lead to meaningful safety improvements and foster a culture where students, staff, and families feel supported, informed, and empowered.