

## ***Talk to your teacher!***

Developing a good relationship with your teacher can greatly enhance your learning experience and help eliminate any misunderstandings about class expectations and policies. *Please note that the following are guidelines and that individual teachers may have different policies, particularly concerning excused/unexcused absences, late assignments, and the rescheduling of tests.*

It is important to talk to your teacher when:

- you would like additional explanations about course expectations or particular classroom work. It's best if you don't wait until you are preparing for an exam to clarify these issues.\*
- you expect to miss class because of a class trip, extracurricular school event (e.g., sports, band, etc.) or religious holiday. Be sure to get assignments in advance and hand them in on time unless you have made special arrangements. (Please consult tip sheet on *Absence Policy Guidelines for Students* for additional information.)
- there is a family illness or death that might interfere with your classroom performance or ability to complete assignments.
- you feel bullied or are being harassed by students inside the classroom. Bullying incidents outside the classroom should be brought to the attention of your school counselor or an administrator.
- you have multiple tests scheduled on one day and would like to request a change in dates for one or more of them. Most teachers will try to work with you on these issues; however, they are not required to do so.
- you have an upcoming major project/performance/athletic event that might impact your schoolwork.
- you need advice about which class to take the following semester in that subject, including whether an Honors or AP class should be considered.
- it's early in the semester and you want to consider being placed in a different level class (i.e., switching from Honors to Regular or vice versa).
- you don't understand the grading policy on a particular assignment or exam.
- you have gotten lower grades than you expected on one or more assignments and want to discuss how to improve your study habits and/or your understanding of teacher expectations.
- you believe grades have been posted incorrectly on Edline.
- you particularly enjoyed a certain class or topic and you would like to request additional reading or learn how to pursue your interest in that subject.
- you have follow-up questions beyond what was covered in class.

***Please see reverse side for important guidelines for resolving student/teacher issues.***

*\* If you think you need more comprehensive and long-term academic help, the counseling office keeps a list of available tutors (for pay) for all subject areas in a binder at the front desk. All parents and students are welcome to use it. Some teachers may have the names of tutors in their subject areas, as well. Free, in-school lunchtime peer tutoring is also available.*

## **Guidelines for resolving student/teacher issues**

These guidelines can aid in the successful resolution of any teacher-related issues and are based directly on teacher feedback. Our teachers here at Whitman sincerely appreciate having issues brought to their attention and are aware that they may not necessarily know about everything going on in a student's life. *Although the teachers are extremely busy, they all are committed to the well-being of their students.*

### **When to approach your teacher**

- Students benefit from more, rather than less, personal contact with their teachers. Edline, while improving communication about grades, sometimes reduces the amount of personal contact. Always feel free to contact your teacher.
- Teachers' stress levels increase at the end of marking periods. If there is a grade-related issue, don't wait until the very end of the marking period to bring it to the teacher's attention. Keep in mind that grade issues can still be resolved after the marking period has ended.
- It is preferable for students to make appointments to meet with teachers outside of class time (before or after school, or during lunch). Although many teachers have responsibilities outside the classroom (coaching, club sponsorship, etc.), they are required by contract to find time to meet with students to resolve issues.
- If issues persist or if you cannot find a time to meet with the teacher, raise the issue with the departmental Resource Teacher (RT) or your counselor, instead. The Resource Teacher provides leadership for the academic department and can act as liaison between the student and teacher to help work out any unresolved instructional issues.
- Communicating with teachers and school counseling staff through lengthy emails or repeated, urgent voice mails can be overwhelming. Teachers and counselors are committed to responding to any issues as soon as possible; however, matters at school do not always permit them to respond immediately.

### **How to approach your teacher**

- Parents and students should use the appropriate chain-of-command when an issue arises. *Approaching the school administration before seeking resolution from the teacher often puts the teacher in a defensive position and can blow the issue out of proportion.*
  - The student (rather than the parent) should first approach the teacher in person or by email.
  - If a student feels too intimidated to approach the teacher, OR if the student-teacher discussion fails to resolve the issue satisfactorily, the student should seek help from his/her counselor or from the Resource Teacher for that academic department.
  - If the issue still is not resolved, the student or parent may request a meeting between the teacher, parents, student, counselor, and possibly Resource Teacher.
  - If the issue remains unresolved, the parents and/or student should request to meet with someone in the administration.
- Students and parents should be respectful and judicious in their choice of words when an issue arises. It is important to gain control of any negative emotions before contacting a teacher. Assume the issue is a matter of misunderstanding, and start by asking for clarification. Don't jump to conclusions. Remember that there are always two sides to every situation.

*Situations where parent intervention is appropriate include: poor or deteriorating academic performance; problematic social interaction in the classroom; bullying (which can be subtle and difficult for the teacher to perceive); attendance or tardiness issues; or when clarification of student's situation is needed. Parents should be sure to call the teacher or counselor when they receive any unexplained calls about absences. This needs to be addressed promptly.*