

West-Mont Christian Academy

Pottstown, PA 19465

The Matthew 18 Principle

We, at West-Mont Christian Academy, strive and encourage others to obey the teachings of Christ. Those teachings include the 2nd greatest commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22: 37-39). In spite of our efforts, there are times when people have different views or perceive situations differently.

Jesus, in His perfect wisdom, knew we would need instruction for these situations and provided this wisdom in the verse Matthew 18: 15-17. When differences of opinion cause conflict, it is West-Mont’s policy to practice “The Matthew 18 Principle.” Using this scripture passage as our guide, we have listed the appropriate steps that are to be taken by students, parents, teachers, and staff in the event of a misunderstanding or disagreement:

1. **Keep the matter confidential.** “With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor...” (Proverbs 11:9a). Only share the problem with those directly involved in an effort to ensure confidentiality.
2. **Keep the circle small.** “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, *just between the two of you*” (Matthew 18:15). The first step and most often the only step needed in solving a person-to-person problem is for one of the two people involved to initiate a face-to-face dialogue. Most problems are solved at the two-people level.
3. **State your concern clearly and concisely.** “...tell him his fault...” (Matthew 18:15). Jesus tells us to be forthright and to love honestly. Sometimes it is difficult to be straightforward and tell someone the very heart of the matter. But restoration and improvement can only come when the issues are lovingly yet clearly presented. Going to the person is not an option; it is a command.
4. **Be forgiving.** “If he listens to you, you have won your brother over” (Matthew 18:15b). This implies that once the matter is resolved we should wholeheartedly forgive and restore the person whose fault has offended us.

As mentioned earlier, most problems are resolved at the two-people level. Forgiveness and restoration are the normal and happy conclusions. However, there are unfortunate times when an individual will not “hear” you or will openly disagree with your version of the problem. The next step is:

5. **You and the other individual should go together to share the matter with the school principal.** “...take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses’ ” (Matthew 18:16). Each person should come to the meeting with a humble and prayerful attitude, willing to submit to the Lord’s will and also be willing to submit to discipline or correction if needed

In summary, “The Matthew 18 Principle” requires that parents talk to teachers about student problems before talking to anyone else including the administrator, other students, or parents. If unresolved at the two-people level, the matter is prayerfully and in an orderly fashion moved upward in the school organizational structure.

A Christian school is a ministry in Christ’s name. Everything that is done in the context of the school must be done His way. Satan would love to destroy the normal flow of friendships and peace found in Christian school education through gossip and slander. But if all of us follow Christ’s way of “The Matthew 18 Principle,” the Christian education experience for students, parents, teachers, and staff will be one of consistent harmony. “Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.” (1 Peter 3:8).