

Introduction

Many parents in non-English speaking countries have sometimes too big expectations from their children, and teachers, and they are usually not shy to say that they want their children to be successful in their [English learning](#), get high grades, and graduate from an English language school as soon as possible, with perfect scores. They sometimes expect their children to become fluent in English after taking only a few classes taught by [native English speakers](#) only and be able to retain it for years to come.

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For an English teacher, this may be too much to handle especially if the teacher is inexperienced and is not familiar with the local language and culture. However, as an English teacher, it is important to manage these expectations by setting realistic goals with the parents and students. By explaining to the parents what they can expect from the class and the student's progress. Also, keep the [communication](#) open so that the parents can voice any concerns they may have.

However, in many cases, these high expectations are not always set by parents. Parents' high expectations are sometimes set by the language school admin (aka sales department), for prestige and/or sales targets. This may add extra pressure on teachers as they may not be aware of what promises the school made to the parents (i.e. learning progress) that the teachers may not be able to deliver in the classroom. And this is not always communicated well between all the parties involved, which in many cases does not end well for many teachers teaching [EFL](#).



Potential issues

School Admin

Before signing up for an English language school, most parents go through a school selection process usually based on location, reviews, and most importantly tuition fees. Once they make a choice they sit down with the school admin to talk details. Now, most school admins, are honest and tell the parents what their expectations should be regarding their child's English learning. Some parents sign up, and some do not, but at least these schools know the service they are selling and will provide exactly what they promised. Some parents may not like it, but that's the nature of the business, and those who understand it, benefit in the long run.

However, some schools are not always forthcoming with the services they provide in order not to risk chasing away potential clients. They do not always tell all the important info parents need to hear before signing up their children for English lessons. That info is usually, but not limited to, that their child will share a classroom with other 5-12 students (sometimes even more) of varied English language levels and skills (not always at par with their child for school convenience), which is crucial for the materials used, pair and group talk/discussions and ultimately their child's progress.

Also, parents are usually not reminded that learning an additional language is a lifelong learning process, just like L1, and that once the child stops using English, they will most likely soon forget most of what they were able to use. To most parents this would mean, being prepared for long-term, tuition fees without any guarantee that their child will develop and/or improve their English skills.

Instead, some school admins may inflate the skills of their teachers, the quality of their curriculum,

and the potential achievements of each child to their parents, selling English lessons as a product that can be stored over time and accessed at any time in the future regardless of whether a child quits/pauses the lessons or not. Leaving parents believing that as soon as their child crosses into the classroom all the English [language skills](#) and knowledge will be poured into their children's minds as you would pour water into a glass.

Add to this that many schools charge 6 months' tuition fees up front, and once parents pay for it, they cannot get their money back.

This, for many parents, creates unreasonably high expectations and for EFL teachers, it creates additional pressure to meet at times unrealistic expectations usually set by the school admins. In many cases, this usually does not end well for many students, schools, parents, and in most cases teachers. The irony is, that many admin staff doing all the consulting with the parents and students, may not always have adequate training in education and very often do not even speak the target language.



Parents

It's not always the school admin that creates inflated expectations. It's sometimes parents that have these high expectations that may have consequences later.

Now, most parents are realistic and are familiar with the basics of English education (teaching and

learning). They may ask some basic questions before signing up their child for English lessons, pay the tuition fees, and hope for the best. In most cases, they communicate well with their child's teacher and admin on progress. Those parents know that a 50 min class per day, with other students in class, may not be enough for their child. And they know that if they want their child to advance faster, parents must put in some work or hire extra teachers for private classes.

Now, there is a very small minority of parents who, for some reason believe that their child/children must be the center of attention of all staff. They sometimes forget that they pay for the basic package and expect premium features. Meaning, that they paid for their child to share a class with the other 12 students, but they want the teacher to give their child undivided attention during class.

Solution

School Admin

One of the best ways for EFL teachers is to have open communications with their school's admin on learning expectations the admin sets when they meet parents. Preferably by asking in detail what is it that the school promises to students' parents regarding [teaching and learning](#), over what period of time, and under what conditions. Then, teachers may go over the following on their own: materials, lesson plans, [class size](#), and students' pre-testing, and read some peer-reviewed research on the topic.

Basically, teachers may want to learn if the school's "sales pitch" to the parents is realistic. If yes, then great, if not, then some teachers may choose to present the school with their knowledge on the topic. But care must be taken as this may agitate the school's management and ultimately result in a dismissal. One needs to keep in mind that most of the time people who work at the school's admin office do not have a degree in education and know very little about [English teaching](#) and learning. Helping the admin understand the difference between what's possible and what is not in the classroom, backed up by some peer-reviewed research, may help them adjust their "sales pitch" and set parents' and students' expectations at a more realistic level.

This would, in many cases, eliminate parents' high expectations, and make EFL teachers' jobs that much easier, and more in line with the best practices in the field.

This is impossible in some schools as it is set in their curriculum, and they may find ways not to change their policies (i.e. franchise schools).

Students' parents

As mentioned earlier, most parents are understanding and fair. They know that their child needs to do a lot of studying on their own before coming to their English class which they share with other students. Those parents only need to be adequately communicated with on the work, progress, and attitude of their child. And this usually works out well for all.

Now, the way to deal with those parents who pay for the basic package and expect the premium features needs to be told exactly that. For more attention, more tailored time, needs, and materials,

a premium package is needed to meet those requirements. Such parents need to be explained that for certain tuition fees time attention and materials are evenly divided among all students as all other students in the class paid the same tuition to learn the same knowledge. Anything over that, the school needs to decide how they want to distribute their resources to meet such demands.



Conclusion

Parents' expectations can be managed by teachers in EFL contexts by understanding what the school promises to parents, over what period of time, and under what conditions. Teachers can also help the admin understand the difference between what's possible and what is not in the [EFL classroom](#), backed up by some peer-reviewed research. If parents have unrealistic expectations, teachers can explain that for certain tuition fees, time attention, and materials are evenly divided among all students. Anything over that, the school needs to decide how they want to distribute their resources to meet such demands. Many disputes and conflicts in small private English language schools in the [EFL context](#) may be solved with very little information exchange between the teachers and the school's admin. It usually all boils down to the expectations, and can those expectations be met. Once all the participants (i.e. the admin, teachers, and students) are on the same page, the resources are efficiently used for teaching and learning.

Teaching EFL for most teachers is a great experience, but as in any field, there are sporadic issues that need some attention. Now, this essay is not advice to any EFL/ESL teacher or professional. Every EFL/ESL teacher works in a different context and environment and should do what is best for them given their circumstances and environments.

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