

Agree to Disagree

You and your student may not always see eye-to-eye on certain things. Politics, diversity, religion... there are any number of hot-button topics that can start a verbal tussle. Yet disagreements can actually be good for your parent/student relationship.

The key is agreeing to disagree in a respectful, open-minded manner. You can do that by:

- **Engaging.** Let your student know that, just because you have had differences in opinion before, you're still very interested in hearing what she has to say about things. Don't avoid the tough topics. You can both learn a great deal from one another by engaging in meaty conversations.
- **Listening.** Allow your student to say his piece, without interrupting to inject your opinion. Show that you're listening by maintaining eye contact, keeping an open posture and reflecting back some of the things he is saying. Sometimes just knowing that you're being *listened to* makes all the difference in the world.
- **Keeping an open mind.** We can all change our minds once we hear the facts – or those facts can clarify a pre-existing opinion. Stay open to that possibility as you and your student exchange opinions and perspectives. It's all part of being a growing, engaged human being.

- **Not taking differences in opinion personally.** If your student takes a different stance than you do, it's not because she hates you or disrespects you. It's likely because she has had experiences that have led her to form a different opinion. It's really not about you.



- **Sharing your pride.** The fact that your student is an independent, critical thinker, no matter his opinion, can be a source of great pride. Don't forget to praise your student for his abilities and his curiosity.

Having an intentional discussion about agreeing to disagree is an important step in developing an adult relationship with your student. Let the conversations begin!

Face-to-Face Disagreements

Sometimes the intense conversations happen when you and your student are face to face, whether it's during a weekend visit home, Parent's Weekend or a holiday break. Your initial tendency may be to "keep the peace" during your limited face time with your student. Yet, avoiding topics that could lead to disagreements can cause important things to go unsaid. So, encourage your student to express his opinions, whether you agree or not. And ask that he listen to yours. That face time may result in your communication patterns opening wider as you and your student learn to talk about the tough stuff, disagreements and all.