

The Parent Role: Empowering Parents Within the Educational Team

Learning 4 All

Empowerment is not about fighting for your child's rights, because fighting means there has to be a winner and a loser: true empowerment comes from everyone on the child's team working together to meet the child's needs



Communication skills that enhance successful collaboration

To gain confidence in your power within the team, focus on the communication skills most likely to affect change:

- Listening
- Friendliness
- Open-mindedness
- Feedback
- Confidence
- Non-verbal communication



Working toward the rights of your child

Start from the position of assuming the school staff share your desire for your child's right to be met

Think about what factors might influence their ability to meet those rights

Determine what factors you can assist in overcoming or finding a workaround

"Team Building" - form the relationship first

It's all in the timing – Where possible, resist the impulse to make an appointment with the staff member on the first day or in the first week

Be present and positive as much as practically possible in those first weeks, find opportunities to give the staff member positive feedback about your student's experience



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The collaboration meeting

- *Make an appointment in the second or even third week to discuss your child. This gives them the opportunity to have gotten to know your child, and makes any information you give them more likely to be remembered*
- Direct their focus – Get started with everyone in the room thinking of your child in the same way that you do: As a whole person with likes, dislikes, interests, skills and abilities.
- *Give the staff member feedback about something your child has found positive so far, about the staff member, or the class, or just school generally*
- Provide brief verbal information about your child's disability, and provide the staff member with a clear education-focused fact sheet
- *Provide brief verbal information about how the disability affects your child's learning, and provide the staff member with a clear education-focused fact sheet, even if your child has an individual education plan (see example provided)*
- Ask the staff member what assistance they might require of you for your child to achieve classroom goals
- *Offer to keep the lines of communication open*
- Make a plan to meet again end of term 1 or early term 2

Maintaining the collaboration

- *Follow up the collaboration meeting with a meeting at the end of Term 1, or early term 2.*
- Follow up whenever you can with positive feedback about what is working well, and provide feedback to higher level staff about what is working well
- *If troubleshooting is required, ask the teacher to meet with you to help you problem solve. You may have a pretty clear idea about what the problems are, however:*
 - Remember that the most successful collaborations stem from addressing concerns when everyone is starting from a position of strength and is open to problem solving
 - The school staff will remember solutions better and be more likely to act on them when they have worked together to come to those solutions

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Name _____

DOB _____

Contact: _____ Ph _____

Diagnoses: _____

Cultural or personal considerations: _____

General Demeanor

Relationships

Learning and behaviour strengths

Learning and behaviour challenges

Compensatory Strategies (what the student will do to compensate for the challenges)

What staff can do to prevent difficulties or escalation of difficulties

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

