



Effective Communication and Advocacy Skills for Parents

Here is some information to help you be a better prepared to advocate for your child in the educational process.

- Understand that advocacy is ok. You have unique expertise about your child and family.
- Put your thoughts in writing so they can be clearly defined and articulate.
- Share information about your child/student such as strengths and weaknesses, helpful accommodations, medical issues, psychological issues, and family situations. Any issues that impact their education.
- Provide data to back up your requests. Such as: dates of meetings, call logs, different evaluations, eligibility, tracking sheets, school suspensions or absences, test scores, amount of homework turned in, etc.
- Validate stated feelings. To diffuse intense emotions, let the other team member know that you hear him or her and that you hear the emotions also. For example ask:
 - It seems you feel that...
 - I sense you are feeling...
 - Is it your feeling...?
- You can ask questions to make sure you understand what is being said, to gain more information, check out the other team member's thoughts and perceptions, and to find out what is being done to help. For example ask:
 - Can you describe for me what...?
 - Can you tell me...?
 - Will you help me understand...?

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Make sure you express your feelings and concerns about your child/student's educational plan by using "I" statements which focus on how you are thinking rather than making judgement about what the other person may be thinking or feeling.

For example ask:

- I am concerned about ...
- I am worried that...
- I feel good about...
- I am frustrated that...

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- Sometimes you will disagree, however, to make sure your voice is heard you need to clearly express your opinion and feelings using an assertive statement.

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For example ask:

- I'm not sure that I agree . . . I want to talk about . . .
- I have a problem with. . . and I would like to explore . . .
- I feel strongly that . . . and I would like to brainstorm . . .
- I am feeling . . . and I would like to discuss . . .
- I am feeling . . . and I like to discuss . . .

You do not want to use an aggressive statement which discounts other people's ideas and feelings. This will cause the other members to feel disrespected, angry, and to lose trust.

"The most important trip you may take in life is meeting people halfway." Henry Boyle