

Tips for Collaborating with Your Child's Teacher or School

Parents and teachers alike want to provide the best learning experience for their children. Collaborating with your child's teacher will help align expectations and goals to ensure success. It is not only important to share information with your child's teacher but to gather information as well. Here are some tips to learning how to successfully collaborate with your child's teacher or school.

Get started now: Plan ahead and gather information

- **Meet the teacher** as close to the first day as possible (even beforehand, if this is an option). For virtual learning, suggest having either a phone or video call. Consider taking a tour of the school to orient yourself and your child.
- **Reinstate bedtime and morning routines** several days prior to the first day of school (e.g., adjust bedtime and wake times, get up and get dressed, etc.).
- **Some children benefit** from having visual supports, such as a highlighted calendar, to see when school will start to help them anticipate and adjust.
- **This school year will be unique** so gather information regarding any differences in learning (e.g., social distancing, wearing a mask, drop-off pick up changes) your child will encounter and discuss those with your child.
- **Ask your teacher** what he/she needs from you to best support your child either virtually or in-person.

Give Information

- **Give information to your child's teacher** to help him/her get to know your child (e.g., your child's likes/dislikes/motivators, attention span, other therapies, recent assessments or medical outcomes, etc.). This is especially helpful if your child will not be interacting with the teacher in person.
- **Create a communication system** (e.g., weekly phone call or email for virtual learning or a communication binder for in-person learning).
- **Create a plan with your child's teacher** for addressing challenges (e.g., if your child is off task during virtual learning sessions, how will you be informed?).
- **Use technology** for efficient collaboration such as email, apps, or even text messaging (check with the teacher on the preferred method).
- **Ask how you can support your child** either virtually or in-person (e.g., create a visual schedule, label your child's materials, create a play skills checklist for the playground, create a list of rules for social distancing or wearing a face mask, etc.).

- **Inform your teacher** of any incentive or reward systems you are using so they can provide reminders during virtual or in-person sessions.

Navigating special education

- **Be “in the know.”** Research the IEP process so you know what to expect, questions to ask, or ask the school for information on the IEP process and special education law
- **Ask to be involved in IEP goal writing** early so you can review/contribute and avoid surprises or disagreements later
- **Provide helpful input** and ask questions during IEP meetings
- **Ask for translation and interpretation services**, if needed
- **Listen to feedback** and suggestions from teachers and provide your suggestions
- **Know what is important to you** regarding goals but also be willing to work as a team
- **If needed, bring an advocate** or someone who can help articulate your concerns
- **Make sure you understand the IEP** prior to signing and request a copy
- **If you already have an IEP**, discuss your IEP and concerns with your child’s teacher. Make sure they are equipped to provide proper accommodations and follow through
- **Set up regular meetings** with your child’s teacher to discuss goals and progress

Stay “In the know”

- **Ask to learn strategies being taught** either virtually or in the classroom so you can use them with your child during homework or independent learning activities
- **Write down concerns** as they arise so you have them ready for the next meeting with the teacher
- **Discuss ways you can monitor your child’s assignments, tests, and projects** with the teacher

Helpful Resources:

www.understood.org

www.parenttoolkit.com

[Autism Speaks: Advocacy Tool Kit](#)

[Wrightslaw: From Emotions to Advocacy:](#)

[The Special Education Survival Guide](#)

[by Peter W. D. Wright and Pamela Darr Wright](#)

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