

## Tips for communicating with your child's school:

1. **Clarify your goals.** Before the meetings, write down what you want to accomplish. Decide what is most important, and what you are willing to negotiate.
2. **Be a good listener.** Allow school officials to explain their opinions. If you don't understand what someone is saying, ask for clarification. "What I hear you saying is . . ." can help ensure that both parties understand.
3. **Offer new solutions.** You have the advantage of not being a "part of the system," and may have new ideas. Do your research and find examples of what other schools have done.
4. **Keep the focus.** The school system is dealing with a large number of children; you are only concerned with your child. Help the meeting stay focused on your child. Mention your child's name frequently, don't drift into generalizations, and resist the urge to fight larger battles.
5. **Stay calm, collected and positive.** Go into the meeting assuming that everyone wants to help. If you say something you regret, simply apologize and try to get back on track.
6. **Don't give up easily.** If you are not satisfied with the school's response, try again.
7. **Recognize the limitations of the school system.** Recognize that the school situation for your child will probably never be perfect. Too many regulations and limited funding mean that the services and accommodations your child receives may not be exactly what you envision for them, and this will probably cause you frustration, anger and stress. Try to recognize that the school will be only one part of the solution for your child and leave some of the stress behind. Your attitude of support, encouragement, and optimism will have the most lasting impact on your child.
8. **Set meetings at the beginning of the year.** Meet to review what is in their file, what helps, and plans of the past. Make a new plan with the teachers, set the accommodations, and agree on them for open communication for all.
9. **Meet throughout the year as needed.** Use email to set meetings with your child's teachers, not as the only mode of communication. If you have questions, concerns, or accommodations that need to be revised, then set up a meeting.
10. **Discuss how to help your child succeed.** Make a plan for how to teach your child to advocate for themselves. Remember, you will not always be there and baby steps are much easier when they are younger than leaps when your child enters college.