



Parent-To-Teacher Communication/Parent Advocacy

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Agenda

- What is Advocacy?
- Communicating Effectively With Your Child's Teacher & School

What is Advocacy?



Plead in Favor Of



advocacy
to change “what is”
into “what should be”

AD·VO·CATE
*/verb: to plead in favor of/
/noun: one who pleads the cause of another/*



Therefore...It's Our Job

*Parents must be their own
children's advocates!*



Advocating for Your Child: Communicating Effectively with Your Child's School



“Do” Principles for Success



**Do Your Homework &
Set Realistic Goals**



**Start with the Teacher & Build
Relationships**



Follow Chain of Command



Document & Follow up

Advocating for Your Child



**Do Your Homework &
Set Realistic Goals**



Create a Learner Profile

- Know your child
 - Your child's strengths (academic, social, intellectual, & creative)
 - Positive aspects of child's learning environment
 - Your child's struggles (academic, social, intellectual, & creative)
 - Obstacles in your child's learning environment
 - Your vision of an ideal school day for your child
 - What you want for your child in 25 years

Supporting the needs
of high potential learners





Create a Learner Profile

- Your child must learn to articulate learner profile
 - Your strengths (academic, social, intellectual, & creative)
 - Positive aspects of your learning environment
 - Your struggles (academic, social, intellectual, & creative)
 - Obstacles in your learning environment
 - Your vision of an ideal school day
 - What you want for your life in the future

Supporting the needs
of high potential learners



Advocating for Your Child:



Start with the Teacher & Build Relationships



Start with the Teacher

- Always begin with the teacher!
 - Put yourself in his/her shoes
 - Would you want someone going over your head at work before talking with you?
- Relationship is important: Get to know the teacher early on
 - Open Houses
 - Volunteer in classroom, lunch, recess, PTA, Field Day, chaperone
 - Get a feel for personality, philosophy, teaching styles
 - Little kindnesses go a long way: Emails when your child enjoyed a topic or activity



Start with the Teacher

- Before contact, plan in advance what you'll say
- Write down observations on child's abilities
- Stay focused on your child's characteristics and not a philosophical "gifted" debate
- Remain diplomatic, fair, yet firm

Source: Smutny, J. F. (in press). Communicating effectively with your gifted child's school. *Parenting for High Potential*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for Gifted Children.





Tips for Teacher Meetings

- ❑ **Make an appointment**—don't drop in or discuss in passing
- ❑ **Document** —what your child has done, said, or read
- ❑ **Plan**—what you're going to say
- ❑ **Choose your words**—start with something positive
- ❑ **Create a partnership**—work as a team; find common ground; where can you be flexible; negotiate solutions
- ❑ **Be diplomatic and positive**—tactful, respectful, not defensive
- ❑ **Focus on child's needs**—be specific
- ❑ **Listen**—it's a two-way street!
- ❑ **Bring sense of humor**—helps deflect negative feelings
- ❑ **Follow up**—summarize discussion, create timeline, and next meeting

Source: Walker, S. Y. (2002). *The survival guide for parents of gifted kids: How to understand, live with, and stick up for your gifted child*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Supporting the needs
of high potential learners



Advocating for Your Child



Document & Follow up



Documentation

- Take notes during meetings
- Keep a binder/email folder with all correspondence, along with all data so available at a moment's notice
- During meeting, repeat back what was heard to ensure all are on the same page
- Manage timelines and deadlines—for both parents and teachers/ administrators





Follow Up

- Very important, as lack of communication can make progress uncertain
 - Thank the teacher/principal/superintendent for meeting
 - Follow up with “thank you” email that outlines plan
 - Obtain copies of any learning contracts or information on your child
 - Talk regularly to your child and the teacher to assess the plan
 - Be consistent in whatever was decided to pursue
 - Don’t let the burden of extra work fall entirely on the teacher—help lighten the load any way you can



Documentation & Follow up

Do

Document all meetings and specific actions

Keep a binder/folder at home with all materials & data

Help in implementing the plan where possible

Manage the timeline and schedule follow up meetings

Don't

Walk out of a meeting without clear next steps

Assume the school/teacher will proactively follow up

Place the burden for implementation solely on the school or teacher

Be surprised if you walk into a meeting with more people than expected!

Stay in Touch!



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