



Multicultural/Multilingual Parents with High Expectations Keys to Success in the Family-School Partnership

Parents as School Partners

By Marbella Cáceres

As a parent, you are your child's first and most important teacher. When your child enters school, you and the school become partners in what you both hope will result in the successful development and education of your child. Years of research show that the more families are actively involved in the education of their children, the more successful the child will be in school and in life.

Research has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by strengthening the role of parents to ensure that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home.

Many parents feel intimidated when talking with school professionals. You should remember that the discussion is about your child, and you know your child better than anyone. When Congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004, parents were renewed as equal partners in their child's education.

This newsletter will give you tips for creating a positive, productive partnership and successful interaction with the school for the meaningful benefit of your child.

As a parent, you want to make sure your child receives the best educational opportunities, appropriate for your child's needs, in order to better prepare him for life as an adult. One aspect of this is the provision of FAPE, which is a Free Appropriate Public Education for every child. Your child may receive any service or support necessary to attend school and make progress in the general education curriculum.



Good Communication

- Introduce yourself to your child's teachers, the principal, and other school staff. An open house or other "back-to-school" event is a great time to start. Simply shaking hands and saying, "Hi, I'm Sophia's mom. I'm looking forward to working with you this year," can set a positive tone.



Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) Newsletter October - December 2018

- It's important to know the appropriate time to talk with school staff. Whenever students are present, school staff do not usually have time to talk to parents for more than a few minutes. If a personal meeting is desired, you should schedule it with the teacher.
- If you are communicating by phone, please keep in mind that teachers usually check voice mail or email only when they are not with their students. If you have an urgent need, ask the school secretary to write down your message and have it delivered directly to the teacher.
- Find out the best method for communicating with school staff. Some staff prefer phone calls while others will respond best to email or written notes. Important information should be communicated in writing if possible.
- If you use email to communicate, try to keep it brief and factual. If you want to tell someone your feelings, talk to the person directly or on the phone.
- Provide the school with the best times and methods to communicate with you. Update contact information, such as your home or cell phone number, whenever there is a change. Respond as quickly as possible when someone contacts you.
- Check your child's backpack daily for notes, newsletters, or other communications from the school.

- Find out how to use the school website and online resources and check them regularly for information.
- If English is a second language for you, ask for information to be provided in your primary language. If you are meeting with the teachers, request ahead of time a language interpreter.

Respectful Interactions

- Treat others with the same respect you would like to have and expect the same from them.
- When discussing school around your child, have a positive attitude. If you have a negative attitude about the school, your child will pick up on it, which will directly affect his or her educational progress.
- Try to respect the variety of needs and concerns of other students and staff members, while speaking up for your own child's individual needs.
- Keep your commitments. Put school conference and meeting dates on your calendar and check it frequently. If you can't make a meeting, call ahead of time to reschedule.





Positive Problem-Solving

- When mistakes are made, try to resolve them quickly and completely. Then move forward. The goal is the successful education of your child.
- Try to approach each new school year as an opportunity for a fresh start regardless of past issues or conflicts.
- You are the expert on your child, and each school staff partner has his or her own particular area of educational expertise and experience. Each can learn from the other how to meet the developmental and educational needs of your child.
- It's important for parents to understand their rights and responsibilities and how the system works. Ask for and read the school district's parent handbook. When you do not understand something, ask for clarification.
- Try to address your questions or concerns to the most appropriate person. It may be the teacher, principal, or superintendent of schools.



- If you have ongoing conflict with a particular staff person, and you are unable to successfully resolve the issue with them directly, ask to speak with their immediate supervisor.
- Try to disagree without being disagreeable. Separate the person from the problem. Keep adult issues between adults. In most cases, you and your child will have an ongoing relationship with the school long after the conflict is past.
- When you feel upset or confused, try to ask questions rather than becoming angry. Ask school staff to explain using words you understand. Learn to communicate assertively, rather than passively or aggressively.
- Focus on possible solutions, rather than the problem itself. Make sure the "problem" is clearly defined.
- When there is a disagreement on how to approach an area of concern, be willing to try something new on a trial basis. Make sure there's a plan in place to collect information during the trial period to determine whether or not the new plan should be continued.
- Contact OCECD if you, as the parent, need training or support at (844) 382-5452.



While working together in partnership may be challenging, it can also be rewarding. The parent-school partnership can accomplish the goal of helping your child to succeed in learning and in life.

Need Help or Have Questions?



If you need help or have questions about partnering with your child's school, please call OCECD at (844) 382-5452 ext. 22 and ask to speak to OCECD's Multicultural/Information Specialist staff.

¿Necesita Ayuda o Tiene Preguntas?

Si usted necesita ayuda o tiene preguntas acerca de cómo trabajar juntamente con la escuela de su hijo(a), por favor llámenos al (844) 382-5452 ext. 22 y pida hablar con un personal Multicultural.



Some information was retrieved from the website of © 2017 PACER Center, Inc. | **Parents with High Expectations** | ACTION Sheet: GE-1 | PACER.org

Advocating for Your Child: Tips for Families of English Language Learners with Disabilities

by Lusa Lo

In the U.S., schools and families are considered as equal partners in the education of children with disabilities.

Families are expected to collaborate with schools and be actively involved in their child's life and academic career. This expectation can be foreign to many families who are new to the country, because schools may be considered as authority figures who know best.

In addition, the lengthy and complicated special education process in the U.S. can be overwhelming to many families of students with disabilities.

This article offers families of students who are English language learners with disabilities some suggestions to help them become involved in the education process as their children's' advocates and decision-makers.





Be Proactive

When a student has a diagnosed disability, the school is required to form an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. This team includes parents, their child (if applicable), and professionals, such as special educators, a speech and language pathologist, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, and a psychologist.

The child's first IEP meeting can be very overwhelming to many parents, since all the professionals will share their child's evaluation results and discuss the types of services their child should receive during the year.

If the school does not meet with parents and explain the IEP process to them prior to the meeting, parents are encouraged to request this meeting, with interpretation support.

Parents are part of their child's IEP team. They have the right to understand the process and be prepared. At this pre-IEP meeting, parents should be able to find out information, such as the purpose of the IEP meeting, their role in the IEP team, what will be discussed at the IEP meeting, and who they can bring to the meeting.



Know Your Parental Rights

At the beginning of the IEP process, a copy of the procedural safeguards notice is provided to the parents. Parents who are not fluent in English have the right to obtain a copy of this document in their native language. This document describes parents' rights during the special education process and important timelines of the process.

For instance, parents have the right to request an independent educational evaluation of their child if they disagree with the evaluation of their child done by the school.

If parents are unclear about any of the information in the document, they should contact the special education coordinator at the school and ask for clarification.

Keep Good Records

Each year, parents of students who are English language learners with disabilities receive a huge amount of written documents from schools, government agencies, and physicians. These documents can include IEPs, evaluation reports from schools and specialists, progress reports, communication logs, and medical records in English and translated versions.

These are important documents that parents must maintain, since many of them can be difficult to recover or recreate. Organizing these records by types and dates will enable parents to search for information easily.



Go Beyond IEP Meetings

A student's IEP team is required to meet annually to discuss the progress the student has made throughout the year, and if changes should be made in the provided special education services.

In addition to the annual IEP meetings, parents can request to meet with the team any time during the year and learn about the progress of their child. During these meetings, parents should also ask about the instructional strategies that are used in their child's school, since many of these strategies are very different from what they have learned in their native country.

Using the same instructional strategies at home can make sure that their children are not confused. Often, these strategies can be used in their native language.

Seek Support from the Community

Parents should not solely rely on schools for resources and supports. Due to budget constraints, many schools do not have the resources and staff members to provide parents with the types of support they need. Parents should consider seeking support from community organizations.

There is at least one Parent Training and Information Center in each state. Some states also have Community Parent Resource Centers that focus on reaching underserved families of children with disabilities, such as

families that are low income or whose first language is not English (see <http://www.parentcenternetwork.org> for more information).

All these centers receive federal funding and are required to support families of children with disabilities, such as offering parent education workshops and providing advocacy in IEP meetings.

For parents of students who are English language learners with disabilities, many of the centers have information about local parent support groups where parents can connect with other parents who speak the same language and have children with similar disabilities. Most of the center services are free or low cost.

Lusa Lo is Associate Professor and Graduate Program Director of Special Education, University of Massachusetts, Boston. She may be reached at lusa.lo@umb.edu.

Retrieved from the web site of the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota
<http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/261>

Citation: Liu, K., Watkins, E., Pompa, D., McLeod, P., Elliott, J. & Gaylord, V. (Eds). (Winter/Spring 2013). Impact: Feature Issue on Educating K-12 English Language Learners with Disabilities, 26(1). [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration and Research and Training Center on Community Living].



**Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities
(OCECD) Newsletter October - December 2018**

Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities
165 W. Center St., Suite 302, Marion, Ohio 43302
1-844-382-5452
www.ocecd.org

To remove your name from our mailing list, or if you have questions, please contact leeand@ocecd.org or call 1-844-382-5452.

OCECD is the Ohio Parent Training and Information Center, funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, Grant #H328M150052. The content of this newsletter and any documents cited herein do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education.

Connect with us:



<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ohio-Coalition-for-the-Education-of-Children-with-Disabilities/52878084351>



<https://www.pinterest.com/ocecd/>



<https://twitter.com/ocecd>