

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES



Step 1

Keep your focus positive.

Keep thoughts of past (or present) problems at school and other negatives from creeping into your mind. Instead, focus positively on your goals and the view that the school wants to do its best for your child. When meeting with school personnel, your mind and body will be primed for battle if you expect difficulty. Take a deep breath. Don't let your frustration or anger get in your efforts to share your ideas or concerns for your child's success.

Step 2

Prioritize and plan.

What's the most important thing that needs to be accomplished for your child? Make a list of the issues, questions, and possible solutions. Rank them. Decide if there are any you can pass on and which one(s) must be addressed. Plan how you are willing to give and take to achieve the higher goal. Map out what you need to say and practice if that helps.

“What's most important for Jordan right now is... We need to focus on...”

Step 3

Actively listen to understand the other person's perspective.

Be direct: “I just don't understand what you are saying.

“Can you explain it in a different way or give me some examples?”

“Is there something you can show me in writing, so I can fully understand?”

Keep asking and wait for responses until you do fully understand. Resist any temptation to answer your questions or put words into someone else's mouth.

Step 4

Clarify your statements if you see a puzzled expression on someone's face and ask for clarification.

To be understood: *“I must not be explaining this clearly; what I'm trying to say is...”*

In the end, ask for the yes.”

As you communicate and negotiate, you will uncover areas where you may agree on the issue that must be addressed but not completely agree on how to address it.

This is when it can be especially helpful to restate and discuss options in a problem-solving way. This means presenting and fully analyzing proposed solutions on their own merits.

It also means asking some direct yet polite questions such as:

“I’m still puzzled. Why isn’t this an option?”

“Felipe needs this. Who has some ideas on how we can make it happen?”