



Collaboration with Parents

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Barriers to parental involvement

School side

- Lack of teacher time
- Lack of understanding of parents' communication styles
- Teacher's misperceptions of parents' abilities
- Fear of tense conversations
- Not trained to work with families
- Concern that closer relationships may mean giving up power and decision making

Parent/guardian side

- Limited family resources and work schedule
- Parent's lack of comfort
- Only hear bad news or don't feel communicated with at all
- Lack of a vested interest
- Difficulty of involvement in upper grades
- Parents' lack of understanding of the educational laws related to special education to know what to ask

Three main points of contact with parents:

1. Initial contact
2. First meeting (face-to-face if possible)
3. Follow-up and progress reporting

Initial Contact

Reach out and get invested in their child

- No matter what format (in person at open house, via email, or newsletter), make sure to pose positive questions to learn more about the child.
- Find out parents' preferred form of communication and then use this throughout the school year
- Ask parents about strengths and recent celebrations of independent skills, as well as special interests and things that motivate the child
- Make a positive contact shortly after the start of the school year (better to report a positive first than a problem)

Assessing student strengths and interests through parental input

Question	Response
<i>What makes the student happy?</i>	
<i>How does the student prefer to spend his/her time?</i>	
<i>What are the student's favorite toys or activities?</i>	
<i>In what areas does the student excel?</i>	
<i>What about the student makes you proud?</i>	
<i>Who does the student like to spend time with?</i>	

Assessing student strengths and interests through parental input

Question	Response
<i>What are the student's favorite times of the day?</i>	
<i>What keeps the student's attention?</i>	
<i>What are the student's favorite places?</i>	
<i>What would the student never want to give up?</i>	
<i>What are the student's favorite snacks, meals, and drinks?</i>	
<i>Does the student have any intense disinterests, aversions, or fears?</i>	

First meeting (face-to-face if possible)

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Setting up the first meeting

- Even if a parent prefers email, there is no replacement for getting parents in front of you to show how you care for their child.
- Help coordinate transportation and fit meeting to their schedule.
- Advocate for administration support to relieve teaching duties if necessary.

Structure of Collaborative Meetings

1. Set up meeting times so all members can attend and create an agenda in advance
2. Introductions (including identifying roles)
3. Communicate objectives
4. Focus on student strengths and framing
5. Identifying EBP interventions
6. Make a plan and assign roles
7. Follow-through with accountability for all team members

Collaborative ESE Team Agenda Team: _____ Date: _____

Materials to bring to meeting: _____

Recorder: _____

Members Present		
1.	4.	7.
2.	5.	8.
3.	6.	9.

Start Time:
End Time:

Meeting Norms:

1. Arrive On-Time...The meeting will begin on time.
2. Come prepared – Bring all needed materials (curriculum mapping, data, thoughts & ideas, etc.)
3. **Put student needs first.** All planning and decisions will be based on data and student needs
4. Stick to the agenda (no sidebars)
5. The note taker will keep record of what is discussed and send out to the group after meeting

Action Items	Who?	Estimated Time	Minutes/Notes
State objective of meeting: By the end of this meeting what do we wish to accomplish as a whole?			
Celebrations: What is working? Each member shares evidence of a strategy that was effective in helping to reach the goals for this student.	ALL		
Chief Challenges: What is the most urgent concern, problem or obstacle to progress and better results (based on data)? Are challenges related to cultural or linguistic influences?			
Proposed Solutions: What are possible concrete, practical solutions to these problems? Include culturally responsive EBPs.			
Action Plan: Which solutions might be best for the team to focus on between now and the next meeting? And who is responsible for each item?			
Open Agenda (if time allows)			

Subject:	Teachers:	Challenges	Solutions	Action Steps

Follow-up and progress reporting

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Importance of following-up

- Provides accountability for both sides in a mutually respectful way.
- Uses the shared vision and keeps continued alignment of that vision.
- Parents can give feedback on progress in real-time before a whole school year passes by.
- Present data in an accessible format. Might be graphs and numerical, or it might be narrative using more simplistic language (avoid educational jargon).
- Sometimes scheduling a 20 minute phone conversation regarding the progress can help parents who are too busy to read and write back about progress.

Example of a simple progress report that is parent friendly

Domain	Goal/Objective	Level of Progress	Notes	Next Steps
Reading				
Math				
Writing				

1: Not Making Progress 2: Making Some Progress 3: Making Significant Progress 4: Mastered

Example of giving parents options for their participation

Please sign and return this page if you have any additional questions, comments or concerns.

_____ (Parent signature)

Additional questions, comments or concerns?

1) Write a response on next page.

2) Email me at the following email: _____

3) Request a brief phone conversation, please include:

_____ (Your phone number) _____ (time/date for me to call you)

4) Request an in-person meeting if you feel your questions, comments or concerns cannot be addressed through other forms of response.

Questions or Comments?

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