



Steps to Success

Communicating with Your Child's School

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With information contributed by

**CADRE-Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special
Education**

Why is Effective Communication so important?

You are the parent or guardian of your child. You have unique and important knowledge of your child. No one knows or loves your child the way you do.

Your passion, as a parent, can help you
communicate brilliantly....

And sometimes, it can **OVERTAKE** you!!!



Check your emotions

- Try to focus on the present, check your historical baggage at the door.
- Focus on positive interactions and hold them in your mind
- Focus positively on your goals
- Be mindful of your “bottom line”



Prioritize and Plan

- Make a list of issues, questions, concerns, and possible solutions.
- What is the most important thing that needs to be accomplished for your child? *“What’s most important for Carlos right now is....”*
- Be aware of your bottom line
- Write down what you want to say, and PRACTICE saying it! *“I really want to focus on...”*
- Organize your paperwork



Actively Listen to Understand

- If you don't understand what someone has said, ask them to repeat or restate it. *“I just don't understand what you are saying. Can you explain it in a different way?”* **OR** *“Is there something you can show me, in writing, so I can fully understand?”*



Active Listening

- Ask your questions until you FULLY understand.
- Avoid the temptation to answer the question for yourself and don't put words in someone else's mouth!

Active Listening Activity!

- Listen
- Reflect
- Practice





Listener Self-Evaluation

- Did I:
 - Sit at a comfortable distance from the speaker?
 - Make eye contact with the speaker?
 - Display a relaxed, receptive posture (lean forward, etc)?
 - Respond with facial expressions?
 - Encourage the speaker with verbal or non-verbal cues (smiles, nods, etc.)?
 - Keep my own comments to a minimum?
 - Wait for the speaker to stop before asking a question?
 - Ask for clarification, additional information?
 - Respond using the words of the speakers?
 - Restate, reflect, summarize the works and emotions of the speaker?



Clarify, Clarify, Clarify

- To be understood:

“I must not be explaining this clearly, what I’m trying to say is...”

“Here’s a copy of...Let’s look at this together. It shows that...”

- So that you understand:

“It sounds like you’re saying...”

“Is that written down anywhere so I can read it?”



Be Prepared to Discuss Options

- Share recommendations *“Our private OT suggested that we might try XYZ, could we do this in the school?”*
- Suggest a trial period *“Could we try it for 8 weeks and see what happens?”*

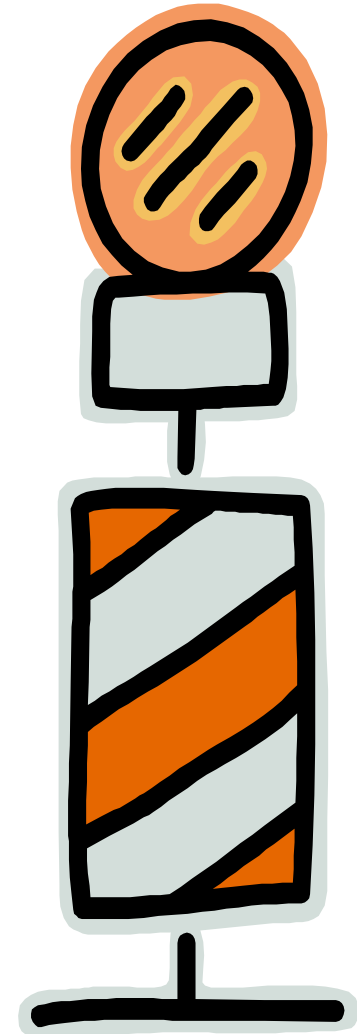


You're Only Human, Just Like Everyone Else!

- Please and thank you go a long way.
- If you make a mistake, or cause offense, say you're sorry (sincerely).
- “You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.”

Acknowledge the Barricades

- Recognize the challenges that the school faces.





Talk the Talk

- Keep your cool
- Focus on the positives
- Be clear about your goals
- Listen. Ask questions. Clarify.
- Keep the focus on meeting your child's needs (of today, not last year!)
- Present options in a collaborative way
“We can...” not “you should” OR “Yes, and...” not “Yes, but...”



Always Remember...

Your passion, as a parent, can help you
communicate brilliantly....

And sometimes, it can **OVERTAKE** you!!!

Talking the Talk can help you keep your
communication brilliant!!