

Working with Your Child's Team

As a member of your child's team, you and the other members will have many opportunities to communicate. Sometimes, this might be in writing (emails, text messages, written reports). Other times, this will happen during a home visit or an annual review of your child's IFSP or IEP.

When you communicate with other team members, be sure you are being understood. Express yourself as clearly as you can. This helps team members understand one another and move forward together.

This practice guide includes suggestions and ideas for effective face-to-face verbal communication.



DEC Recommended Practices: Teaming and Collaboration 1–5

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Developing and Using Communication Skills

- When sitting down to meet with other team members, find a place comfortable for all of you. At home, this might be the kitchen table. In a classroom, it might be comfortable to sit in adult-size chairs around or on the same side of a table or desk. Feeling relaxed will encourage a more open conversation.
- Allow enough time for each of you to talk and really listen to one another. Don't just grab a teacher on their way in or out of their classroom. Instead, ask about scheduling a convenient time to talk.
- Before talking with another team member, take time to think about what you want to say. You don't have to rehearse what you want to say, but think about using words that are clear and will be understood by other team members. If you're uncomfortable, take a deep breath and focus on the points you want to make.
- Start a conversation by explaining the what you want to talk about. It will also help if you are clear about what you hope will result from the discussion. That way, other team members will better understand what you want to accomplish.
- Conversations and discussions are about taking turns between listening and talking. One person talks while the others listen. Asking questions or making a statement to clarify what the listener thinks is being said can make sure you are all headed in the same direction. Summarizing discussions and plans in writing is a good follow-up to any meeting.

A Quick Peek

Sondra found a note in Lenny's backpack that his preschool teacher wanted to meet with her about Lenny's hitting other children.

Remembering some of the ideas she learned in a parent-teacher workshop about communication, Sondra drove to the meeting focusing on Lenny, rather than who might be at fault.

As she arrived, Mr. Smith greeted her warmly and thanked her for coming. He gestured to two chairs away from his desk and suggested they sit there.

Sondra noticed he turned off his cell phone and left it on his desk. Mr. Smith began the conversation by telling her how much he enjoyed Lenny's humor and energy and then shared some of the day's work that Lenny had completed. She looked at Lenny's work and was glad the conversation had begun pleasantly.

Then in a voice she hoped sounded polite, she said she wanted to know what had been happening in the class prior to the Lenny hitting others. She said it was unusual for Lenny to hit and she wanted to figure out what might have caused him to behave that way.

Mr. Smith said he agreed with her, and he shared his observations of events leading up to the behavior. Sondra focused on listening to him, and he listened to her views and ideas.

Together they shared information about both home and the classroom and came up with several ideas that they each could use.

Signs of Success

- Both you and the other team members feel recognized and understood
- Conversations are calm and focused on solutions
- You and the other team members know the next steps you will take



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