



Volume 2, Issue 3

Family - School Partnership



November 2011

where every seat counts

Welcome!

Roundtable is the quarterly e-newsletter of the Family-School Partnership at The Advocacy Center. Our goal is to give families the tools to fully participate in their children's education. When families partner with schools, they form a strong foundation of support for children. This gathering is casual with a family and school-friendly atmosphere. You are invited to visit often. Contribute your questions, comments, topic suggestions or writing at

Why Roundtable?

We chose the name "Roundtable" because at a round table there is no seat that is more important than any other seat. Since there is no head of the table, everyone seated is an equal member. Children benefit when families and schools work together.

In this Issue...

This is our "Parent Engagement" issue with essays and helpful tips on how to work together with your child's school, as well as information about upcoming workshops.

Remember ~

When parents and professionals work together, everyone benefits – especially our children!

If you have questions, need help, or would like more information about our workshops, please contact us. All services are free to parents and all information is confidential.

Family-School Partnership at The Advocacy Center

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To subscribe to Roundtable please e-mail Dixon@advocacycenter.com

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Publications within this newsletter should not be considered an endorsement by The Advocacy Center and/or the funders.

To view the resources on our website click here:
<http://specialedparentcenter.org/en/1/resources>

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent–Teacher Conferences: A Tip Sheet for Parents

As a parent, you are your child’s first and most important teacher. You and your child’s school have something in common: You both want your child to learn and do well. When parents and teachers talk to each other, each person can share important information about your child’s talents and needs. Each person can also learn something new about how to help your child. Parent–teacher conferences are a great way to start talking to your child’s teachers. This tip sheet suggests ways that you can make the most of parent-teacher conferences so that everyone wins, especially your child.

Checklist: Before the Conference

- Schedule a time to meet. If you can’t go at the scheduled time, ask the teacher about other times.
- Review your child’s work, grades, and progress reports.
- Talk with your child about his or her progress in school.
- Talk with others—family members, after school staff, mentors, etc.—about your child’s strengths and needs.
- Make a list of questions to ask during the conference.
- Think about ways you would like to be involved in your child’s learning so that you can discuss them with the teacher.

What should you expect?

- Two-Way Communication— *it is best when both people talk AND listen!*
- Emphasis on Learning- *focus on what the child is learning in school, both academically and socially.*
- Opportunities and Challenges— *Be prepared to hear positive feedback about your child’s progress and feedback about opportunities for improvement.*
- Assignments and assessments- *Ask to see examples of your child’s work. Ask for an explanation of how the teacher assigns grades.*
- Your thoughts about your child- *Be sure to share your thoughts and feelings about your child.*
- Support learning at home- *Ask what you can do at home to help your child learn.*
- Support Learning at School- *Find out what services are available at the school to help your child. Ask how the teacher will both challenge your child and support your child when he or she needs it.*

How should you follow up?

Make a plan. Write down the things that you and the teacher will each do to support your child. You can do this during the conference or after. Write down what you will do, when, and how often. Make plans to check in with the teacher in the coming months.

Schedule another time to talk. Communication should go both ways. Ask how you can contact the teacher. And don’t forget to ask how the teacher will contact you too. There are many ways to communicate—in person, by phone, notes, email. Make a plan that works for both of you. Be sure to schedule at least one more time to talk in the next few months.

Talk to your child. The parent–teacher conference is all about your child, so don’t forget to include him or her. Share with your child what you learned. Show him or her how you will help with learning at home. Ask for his or her suggestions.

Opportunities to Learn More

PATH– Parents As Transition Helpers

At this FREE 5-hour conference, you will learn more about:

- Developing a Vision for Your Child's Future
- The Timeline for Transition and Diploma Options
- Using the IEP as a Tool for Transition
- Entitlement to Eligibility
- Getting and Keeping the First Job
- Post-Secondary Options
- Lunch will be provided

For more information or to register: Click on the following links:

[December 5 \(9:30am-2:30pm\) Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES \(Newark\)](#)

[January 9 \(9:30am-2:30pm\) Genesee Valley BOCES \(LeRoy\)](#)

Walk-In Wednesdays

Parents and/or caregivers will have a chance to meet one on one with a representative from The Advocacy Center. The purpose of these sessions is to provide assistance and answer questions regarding your child's education.

To make sure the meeting is productive, please bring the following:

- Educational records/documents
- A list of questions that you would like to discuss
- Your desired outcome

Check our calendar for dates and times this winter! <http://specialedparentcenter.org/modules/events/>

Parent Member Training

Have you ever considered becoming a parent member for the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) or Committee on Special Education (CSE) in your school district?

What is a parent member?

A parent member of the CPSE/CSE is a parent of a child with a disability who lives in the school district or a neighboring school district. They attend the Committee meetings to support the parents/guardians and to help insure that the focus of the meeting is on the child. A parent member of the CPSE/CSE should not be confused with a Parent Advocate.

The role of the parent member at a Committee on Special Education meeting is to:

- support the parent(s) and explain the process as needed
- provide feedback from a parent's point of view
- seek clarification and explain to the parent as needed
- keep all student and family information strictly confidential

For more information please see our website: http://specialedparentcenter.org/en/17/parent_member_training

Upcoming Dates: click on links below to register:

[December 6th \(9:30am-2:30pm\) Pembroke Central School](#)

[January 17th \(9:30am-2:30pm\) Geneva City School District](#)

Maritza's Inspiración



Maritza Cubi is
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Parent Involvement

By Maritza Cubi

Parents have sometimes struggled with how involved they should be in their child's education. Many have come across difficulties in defining the role of an involved parent. Open communication is the key and it can have a strong influence in your child's success! By being involved and developing a positive relationship with teachers, and school staff, you are on your way to becoming a partner in your child's education. Under the No Child Left Behind Act (the Elementary and Secondary School Act), parental involvement is defined as the participation of parents in regular, two-way meaningful communication about student academic learning and other school activities. It also includes ensuring that parents play an integral role in assisting in their child's learning, that parents are encouraged to be actively involved, and that parents are full partners in their child's education including decision- making.

The first step that a parent can take is to reach out to the school staff. Invite your child's teacher to communicate with you. Offer your phone number and email address along with the times you are most likely available. Ask them for their contact information and their preferred method of communication. Keep open lines of communication with teachers. This looks different for everyone but by being proactive instead of reactive, the relationship will most likely be positive. Parents should be as visible as possible at their child's school. This may also look different for each parent, but some ways parents can be visible at their child's school are by attending Open Houses and parent-teacher conferences or by volunteering or joining committees. Parents can also be involved at home by supporting learning by talking with their child about school and helping with homework.

Studies have found that students who have involved parents, no matter what their income or background, are most likely to succeed!!

April's Alternative Dish



April Dixon
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Back to School: Leaving Last Year

An Ideal Relationship



Have you ever counted the many times online dating commercials are shown during your favorite television program? They all promise to help you find the ultimate relationship. A kind, smiling and trusting face reassures that whether you are looking for a date or marriage, their dating service will help you find a partner. Some advertisers include several customer testimonials. The couples share how they felt after meeting “the one.” It totally renews our faith in “happily ever after.”

I woke up at 2:30am thinking about the recipe for a great relationship. The dot.com sites list similar interests, sharing core values and communication as the starting place. They acknowledge the importance of compatibility and mutual respect in this process. I believe that both partners would benefit from the 90/10 rule. Only 10% of your energy should be spent on past difficulties and 90% of your energy should be used on seeking positive solutions.

Family – school partnerships could use this type of public relations commercial. Can you picture school staff, elementary and high school students and their families wearing “TEAM” t-shirts and smiling as they share their belief that every child can be successful in school? Our commitment to ensuring clear, positive and respectful communication is the key to building an ideal relationship. Just as a photograph captures the image of one particular moment in time, we must remember that a bad day (and we all have them) is just one moment in the relationship. One bad day does not have to be a deal breaker or represent the way things will always be. I have met people who took the plunge and signed up with an online dating service. They willingly share how the commercials influenced their decision to buy into the process. They all report that although their relationship success didn’t happen right away, they refused to give up. Our imaginary family-school partnership advertisement might cause a lot of eye rolling, but what if watching it totally renews everyone’s faith in happily ever after? What would happen if we bought into the idea and tried some ways to make things work? I believe it is worth trying. Hey, you never know!