

## ***How can parents communicate effectively with the school?***

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Communicating effectively with school and district personnel is essential for the student to have a successful learning experience and for meeting and supporting individual needs. In order to be an effective advocate for your child, it is important for you to understand the chain of communication that must be followed in order to successfully deal with difficult issues. Parents should deal directly with the issue as soon as practical. The following suggestions are recommended for establishing mutual respect and building working partnerships.

### **For Individual concerns in the classroom:**

#### **1. Talk with your child:**

- Seek ways to encourage a love of learning and a positive attitude toward school.
- Share your interest in your child reaching his/her optimal performance.
- Focus on the child's specific needs and learning styles.
- Brainstorm creative solutions. Be sure your "facts" are based on substantial and accurate information.
- Encourage your child to become his/her own advocate, to be tactful and respectful, to seek solutions to problems, and to be sensitive to others.
- Model the behavior for solving problems that you would want your child to imitate.

#### **2. Talk with your child's teacher:**

- Consider a phone call or e-mail as initial communication.
- Schedule a time, in advance, to meet with the teacher.
- Focus on the child's individual learning needs. Be specific about your concerns, what strategies you have tried at home, and ask for suggested way you and your child's teacher can work together to solve any problem.
- Respect the teacher's planning time.
- Respect the teacher's time at home with family.
- Refrain from airing the problem with other parents.
- Assume that you do not know everything that is happening in the classroom or in the school setting. Ask the teacher to describe the instructional day.
- Bring written questions for your meeting.
- Volunteer to assist the teacher in finding options for dealing with the needs of your child.
- Provide suggestions for setting short and long-term goals for your child's learning. Establish a timeline and try to reach consensus on a plan of action.
- Use the Extended Learning Program's mission statement, goals and other pertinent policies as a guide for discussion.
- Give the teacher adequate time to address any issues. Rephrase, redirect and reschedule a time for your questions and concerns while keeping the focus on your child's needs. Talking to the principal before allowing the teacher an opportunity to respond will only strain any sense of trust and respect between parent and teacher.
- Be sensitive to time limitations of the classroom teacher as well as the needs of other children in the classroom. Offer to help with materials, ideas, time, resources, field trips or mentorships.
- Recognize that parents of gifted children often display the same common characteristics of giftedness as their children.
- Be assertive, not adversarial. Be part of the solution, not the problem.
- Be respectful and use common sense.
- Be willing to compromise.
- Keep records of your meetings with school personnel, including dates, topics, goals, means for evaluating success and timeline.

## ***How can parents communicate effectively with the school? (continued)***

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### **3. Talk with your school's principal:**

- With teacher concerns.
- Follow many of the same steps used when talking to your child's teacher when talking about the problem with the school principal.
- Relate your discussions with your child's teacher to the principal in a concise and objective manner.
- Listen positively to the suggestions given and develop a plan of action including goals, method for measuring goals and a timeline.

### **For Extended Learning Program concerns:**

#### **1. Talk with your school's Extended Learning Program Teacher**

- If you have a concern about the substance or delivery of Extended Learning Program services (curriculum, future steps, etc.).

#### **2. Contact Kathy Paul, Coordinator of Extended Learning Program:**

- If you have specific issues that are not solved through the above channels.
- If you have a sensitive issue.

#### **3. Contact the Associate Superintendent for Johnston Community Schools:**

- If you need further clarification of a district policy.
- If you have concerns that are not resolved.