



Families Together, Inc.



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Connections

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The Parent-Teacher Partnership

There is nothing new about the news that positive parent-teacher relationship contributes to your child's school success. At Families Together, we have worked with families for many years to build relationships with schools and professionals that are respectful and fruitful for the children with disabilities in our state.

You may be thinking, "easier said than done". After all, there are teachers your child will love and teachers your child may not. Whatever the case, your child's teacher is an important person in your child's life. And you can help make their relationship a strong and rewarding one. "A positive parent-teacher relationship helps your child feel good about school and be successful in school," advises Diane Levin, Ph.D., professor of education at Wheelock College. "It demonstrates to your child that he can trust his teacher, because you do. This positive relationship makes a child feel like the important people in his life are working together."

Communicating well is a key factor for making this relationship work. "Communication on both sides is extremely important," notes teacher Susan Becker, M. Ed. "The parents need information about what and

how their child is learning, and the teacher needs important feedback from the parent about the child's academic and social development." Try these strategies to build a positive relationship with your child's teacher.

Approach this relationship with respect. Treat the teacher-parent-child relationship the way you would any really important one in your life. Create a problem-solving partnership, instead of confronting a teacher immediately with what's wrong.

Let your child develop his own relationship with the teacher. "This is one of the first relationships with an adult your child may have outside the family unit. If you take a back seat and let the relationship develop without much interference, a special bond may develop," advises guidance counselor Linda Lendman.

Try not to brag. Of course you think your child is brilliant, but bragging over her many accomplishments may send a message to the teacher that you think he may not be good enough to teach your child. "You don't need to sell your child to the teacher," notes Michael Thompson Ph.D., "you have

to trust that your teacher will come to know what's important herself.

Remember how you liked (or disliked) your teachers. Your experience at school is likely to affect your attitude toward your child's teacher. "It's important to leave your own baggage at the door, so you can talk about your child with the teacher (and not about you!)" adds Michael Thompson, Ph.D.

Never publicly discredit your child's teacher. Venting on Facebook, or other social media about conflicts you may encounter with a teacher or professional are never ways to solve problems. Remember that professionals have feelings and likely did not intend the hurt you may feel. Work directly with the teacher and then work your way up the "chain of command" to resolve problems privately and effectively. Discrediting any person in authority in front of your child will undermine your authority in the child's eyes as well.

Adapted from: www.pbs.org/parents/education/going-to-school/parent-involvement/parent-teacher-partnership/



Family Story

Megan's Lost Year: A Family Story of Perseverance, by Kathy Johnson

I remember that morning very clearly. Megan, in the kitchen, fixing breakfast and feeding her cats. Her father and I leaving, heading out to drop off the car at the repair shop and then me going to work. When we returned home that evening, we found our daughter in a very different state from how we had left her. She stared at us, looking very frightened, as if she didn't know where she was. She couldn't talk to tell us what was wrong. We began to suspect she had a seizure, although she had been seizure free for the past 10 years. We took her to the emergency room, where she began to have more typical seizure activity, with posturing and shaking. She was diagnosed with status epilepticus (prolonged seizure activity) and admitted to the hospital. What started out as a typical Friday for our family had turned into the beginning of a year-long struggle to get our daughter's life back.

After a six day hospital stay and a total of nine different seizure medications, her seizures finally stopped, and she was sent home. But she was not back to normal. She was extremely slow to respond, sometimes taking hours to answer a question. She was barely eating anything and kept refusing to take her medication. She would sit or stand for hours in one place, just staring blankly. Over the next few weeks, she became completely unresponsive. She was not able to talk, feed, dress, or care for herself. She became malnourished and had to have a feeding tube placed in her stomach. She had such a significant change in her behavior, for which we had no plausible explanation.

Although Megan was born with cerebral palsy and limited use of her left side, she had always done well. At 32 years old, she was mostly self-sufficient. She loved working with small children, and prior to this, had been working at the local Head Start program. For the most part, the doctors evaluating Megan had not known her prior to this illness. Despite our discussions, they couldn't seem to understand how different she was from before. The most frustrating part of all was that they had no answers as to why this was happening and no plan for how to make her better. We took Megan to see many doctors: two neurologists, two epileptologists, her primary care physician, and two psychiatrists. She had been hospitalized again for a week of video EEG monitoring, only to be sent home with anti-psychotic and anti-depressant medication. Nothing was helping.

After months of no progress, Megan's sister (a pediatrician), made a referral for her to be evaluated at The Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. It is an amazing place; large and impressive, but organized and very efficient. Megan had a team of multiple doctors with an epileptologist taking the lead. On the third day of her evaluation, her doctors met with us. The psychiatrist that was part of the team sat on Megan's bed, held her hand, and tried to make eye contact. He told us that he believed Megan had Catatonia, a condition that made her unable to respond to us even though she was physically able to. The Catatonia had been caused by her prolonged seizures. He promised us that she would "get her life back". They were the first and only words of hope we had heard in eleven months. We had a team of doctors that had listened to us, and we were so grateful. Megan remained hospitalized at Mayo for a total of 28 days. She was treated with extremely high doses of Ativan, requiring close monitoring. She made progress, but ultimately needed multiple treatments with Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) to bring her back to her former self. It worked. Megan is back to doing all the things she enjoys - playing with her two cats, shopping, going to movies, and spending time with her little nephews and niece. She has no memory of the eleven months she had Catatonia, which in many ways, is a blessing. She is contemplating going back to work or going to college to get more hours toward her associates degree. Her father calls her "our little chatterbox", and we smile and remember how very different that was from last year.

From the Director's Desk

Greetings Families and Appointed Education Advocates,

The new school year is not so new by now. If any concerns arise that Families Together can help you with, please call.

Many of the families we serve have a child whom receives Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). There has been a ruling from the Department of Labor that may affect the way HCBS services will be provided. Please visit the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability, (<http://www.kdads.ks.gov/CSP/CSP>) website for the documents on the "final rule". The Kansas Governor has asked that the "final rule" not be applied to home health workers, but that ruling is still pending. These developments are critical to the services that your child receives from the HCBS waiver. This is an "ever-changing" situation, so stay informed.

The elections in November are very important. Get to know the candidates who are running in your part of the state. Their work on your behalf will have long lasting effects of the services that your child or young adult may need. VOTE!

Best wishes,

Connie

Many families with children with special needs have significant challenges along the way. I hope our story will help you to trust your instincts regarding your children and to persevere in the face of challenging times. We were so fortunate to have had the support of our family, church, and my colleagues at work. We were blessed to have Megan as part of our family, and equally blessed to have her back.

La Asociación de Padres y Maestros

No es nada nuevo sobre la noticia de que la relación positiva entre padres y maestros contribuye al éxito escolar de su hijo. En Familias Unidas, Inc. hemos trabajado durante muchos años para construir relaciones con las escuelas y los profesionales que respeten los beneficios para los niños con discapacidad en nuestro estado. Quizás usted pueda estar pensando, "Es más fácil decirlo que hacerlo." Después de todo, habrá maestros que a su hijo le encantarán y algunos que no. Habrán maestros que de igual manera a usted se llevarán bien y algunos no. Hay profesores que quizás adoren a su hijo y algunos que simplemente no lo entiendan. Pero cualquiera que sea el caso, la maestra de su hijo es una persona importante en su vida y usted puede ayudar a formar una relación fuerte y gratificante.

Una relación positiva entre padres y maestros ayuda a su hijo a sentirse bien acerca de la escuela y tener éxito, aconseja Diane Levin, Ph.D., profesora de educación en Wheelock College. "Esto le demuestra a su hijo puede confiar en su maestro, así como usted. Esta relación positiva hace que un niño se sienta que las personas son importantes en su vida que están trabajando juntos".



La comunicación es también un factor clave para hacer que ésta relación funcione. "La comunicación en ambos lados es muy importante", señala el profesor Susan Becker, M. Ed. "Los padres necesitan información sobre qué y cómo están aprendiendo sus hijos, y el profesor necesita información importante de los padres sobre el desarrollo académico y social del niño." Pero la comunicación efectiva con un maestro muy ocupado, que quizás tenga hasta 30 niños en una clase, puede ser un reto. ¿Cuándo es el momento adecuado para hablar - y cuándo no lo es? ¿Cómo puede obtener su atención? ¿Qué tema debe discutir con ella y qué no? ¿Cómo se crea una relación con alguien que sólo ve algunas veces durante el año? ¿Y cómo se logra esto, sin verse como un dolor de cabeza?

Ponga a prueba estas estrategias para construir una relación positiva con el maestro de su hijo (así como con otros profesionales).

Acérquese a ésta relación con respeto. Trate su relación de maestro-padre-hijo como lo haría con otra relación que es realmente importante en su vida. Crear una asociación de resolución de problemas, en lugar de confrontar al maestro de inmediato con problemas." Haga una reunión con el profesor para intercambiar ideas y colaborar maneras de ayudar a su hijo, en vez de darle un sermón," recomienda Susan Becker, M. Ed.

Déje que su niño desarrolle su propia relación con el profesor. "Esta es una de las primeras relaciones que un adulto pueda tener su hijo fuera de la unidad familiar. Si usted se detiene un poco y deja que la relación se desarrolle sin mucha interferencia, un lazo especial se puede desarrollar ", informa la consejera Linda Lendman. "Para los niños pequeños, la relación de maestro-niño es una relación de amor", añade Michael Thompson, Ph.D. "De hecho, puede ser su primera relación de amor aparte de la de sus padres y puede ser bastante fuerte y maravillosa."

Trate de no presumir. Por supuesto, usted cree que su hijo es brillante, pero presumiendo sobre sus muchos logros puede enviar un mensaje a la maestra que usted piensa que no puede ser lo suficientemente buena como para enseñar a su hijo. "Usted no necesita encomendar a su niño a la maestra", señala Michael Thompson Ph.D., "usted tiene que confiar en que su profesor se dará cuenta por sí mismo lo que es importante. Decirle a un maestro que a su hijo le gusta leer entusiasmará al maestro. Pero desafiar a su profesor con declaraciones como 'Susie leyó 70 libros durante el verano' o 'Mateo es un genio en matemáticas, 'puede ser contraproducente'".

¿Recuerdas cómo le gustaba (o no le gustaba) a sus maestros. Su experiencia en la escuela es probable que afecte su actitud hacia al maestro de su hijo. "Es importante que no relate lo negativo a su hijo/a, así para que usted puede hablar de su hijo con el maestro (y no sobre usted!)", Añade Michael Thompson, Ph.D.

Nunca desacredite públicamente al maestro de su hijo. Expresar en Facebook u otras redes sociales acerca de los conflictos que puedan aparecer en un profesor o profesional nunca son maneras de resolver problemas. Recuerde que los profesionales tienen sentimientos y que probablemente no tenían intención de causar el dolor que usted pueda sentir. Trabaje directamente con la maestra y luego escale su camino hasta la "cadena de mando" para resolver los problemas en privado y de manera efectiva. Desacreditar a cualquier persona con autoridad frente a su hijo también socavará su autoridad en los ojos del niño. Adaptado desde, www.pbs.org/parents/education/going-to-school/parent-involvement/parent-teacher-partnership/

Opening in the Topeka Center

Half-time position available for outreach and assisting parents.
For more information contact:
topeka@families-together.org or call 785-233-4777

Helpful Resources

Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS)

www.kansasmtss.org

Kansas' Technical Assistance System Network (TASN)

ksdetasn.org

Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC)

www.kpirc.org

Visit www.families-together.org or contact a center near you for upcoming events!

Garden City Center 1-888-820-6364	gardencity@families-together.org
Kansas City Center 1-877-499-5369	kansascity@families-together.org
Topeka Center 1-800-264-6343	topeka@families-together.org
Wichita Center 1-888-815-6364	wichita@families-together.org

Exemplary Practices

Families Together has been selected as an organization that utilizes Exemplary Practices in Partnering with Diverse Families through The Family Voices National Center for Family-Professional Partnership. Some of the exemplary practices that Families Together was recognized for are provision of language access, diverse office environment, a clear commitment to learn about and partner with diverse families, connecting families to other families with similar experiences and opportunities for families to share their opinions and see changes implemented as a result of those opinions. We are excited to share our practices with other states as well as the dissemination of a white paper about our Exemplary Partnerships.

Return Service Requested



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