

# A PEATC

Do You Know....



## Fact Sheet for Virginia's Parents Parent-School Partnerships Can Make the Difference

### Parents are Key Partners!

Parents are key partners in the educational process and as a parent, you provide important information that can help in decision-making and can have a significant effect on your student's academic and social successes. This is particularly true if you have a **student receiving services under an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan**. These students need extra support from you and from the school team.

As the parent, **you help set the tone** with the team that will be working with your student. Creating positive relationships with your student's school team will pay off in the long run and **collaborative relationships** also help you get through any period of disagreement or conflict, which in a student's **school** career of 15-20 years, is certainly likely to occur. As a partner in your student's education:

- ✓ You can **influence the school's expectations** for your student. If you have high expectations, your student's team will have high expectations.
- ✓ You can help foster ongoing **two-way communication** with the school.
- ✓ You can help ensure **individualized educational planning** that focuses on your student's abilities, strengths, areas of need, and self-determination.
- ✓ You can **reinforce what your student is learning** during the school day and **increase learning opportunities** at home, in the neighborhood, and during family activities.
- ✓ You can help ensure **mutual respect and consideration** between all of the parties by being courteous and professional even during periods of disagreement and by **letting the school team know when they are doing a good job**. Everyone likes to be appreciated and it shows that you are all on the same team.
- ✓ You can **talk in a positive way** to your student about their team. They will likely adopt your attitudes and feelings about their teachers and therapists. You want him to have a good relationship with those working closely with him.
- ✓ You can ensure that you meet your responsibility to **serve as your student's role model, to provide guidance, support learning, and build and maintain a healthy relationship** with your student.

### Additional Ways to Partner with Your Student's School

- **Attend IEP and 504 meetings** and provide input into your student's educational program.
- Let the team know if there is a **change that can affect your student's education** (divorce, deployment, medication change, etc.)
- **Volunteer** in your student's classroom. Chaperone field trips if you are able.
- Join the local **Special Education Advisory Committee** so you can help influence school division policy.
- **Attend PTA meetings**. These meetings are for all parents, including those who have students with disabilities.
- **Attend Back to School** events and **parent/teacher conferences**.

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# Fact Sheet for Virginia's Parents

## I Disagree with the School Team. What Now?

CADRE, the Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education, has a brief Guide on *Communicating with Your Child's School*. Here are some tips from that Guide:

<https://www.cadeworks.org/sites/default/files/resources/CADRE%20Steps%20To%20Success%202019%20Accessible.pdf>

- ✓ **Focus on the goals** you are trying to achieve and believe that the school wants to do what is appropriate. Try to keep your fears and negative feelings at bay.
- ✓ **Prioritize and Plan.** Determine what the most important thing is that needs to be accomplished. Come up with a list of issues, questions, and solutions. **Be flexible.** Figure out if you are **willing to compromise** on some points and write down your talking points so that you remember them.
- ✓ **Actively listen** to understand the perspective of others on the team. If you don't understand what they are saying, ask them to repeat it, say in another way, or ask for the information in writing. Don't get frustrated if you need more explanation.
- ✓ **Clarify what you are saying** if someone on the team doesn't understand what you are relaying or asking for. Reframe the issue and try to clear up any misunderstandings.
- ✓ **Provide options/solutions** for discussion as needed. You may think of something the school team hasn't. If you've done any research, share it. If the school team is reluctant to try something, see if they will do it on a trial basis.
- ✓ **Keep the focus on your student and his education.** Refocus the team on your student if necessary and remind everyone that you are all there for the same purpose.
- ✓ **If someone is helpful, thank them.** If you make a mistake or get frustrated or angry, **apologize.** This can go a long way to maintaining partnerships.

If your student has an IEP and you cannot resolve a conflict, there are dispute resolution processes available. See *Virginia's Parents' Guide to Dispute Resolution*

## Stay Involved!

When parents and educators become active, respectful partners, students win. Family – school partnerships create pathways for academic and adult life success. As partners, parents and professionals share important responsibilities.

**Support a student's development and learning** in school and at home. When parents communicate that learning is a top priority, students are more apt to make it a top priority. Parents can show their interest by talking with their students about school (what is boring, what is cool, who is the best teacher, what's up with the basketball team, etc.)

**Hold high expectation for your student.** He will typically live up or down to the expectations created by family and teachers.

**Communicate positively and regularly with the school.** Find ways of communicating that work for all. Write notes, text, send emails or set up phone chat dates.

PEATC's mission focuses on building positive futures for Virginia's children by working collaboratively with families, schools and communities to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.

For more information about us, please contact:

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