



Assertiveness and Effective Communication

While you are working with the school team, there will be times when you disagree or make an assertive statement. It is important to keep in mind that your message should be clear and direct but *not* aggressive or hostile. Avoid making overstatements and using words that indicate absolutes. Overstatements or exaggerations will hasten a loss of credibility.

Avoid putting the other person on the defensive. Attack issues, not people.

Assertiveness is:

1. Knowing and understanding your rights;
2. Knowing and understanding your child's rights;
3. Asking questions anytime you need clarification;
4. Repeating a question until it is satisfactorily answered;
5. Insisting that all persons who should be at an IEP meeting are there, especially someone in authority;
6. Keeping a paper trail of all communication regarding your child's education, sending copies to the appropriate people, and requesting copies and records from school;
7. Monitoring to be sure that the IEP is being implemented and followed;
8. Knowing that you are a full partner in planning your child's education program and expecting to be treated as such;
9. Letting people know that you intend to resolve issues and are willing to go to due process, if necessary;
10. Learning all you can about your child's disability and needs;
11. Knowing about available resources and using them;
12. Finding out who the right person to talk to is, knowing who the key persons are, and trying all avenues;
13. Praising and thanking people when appropriate;
14. Never saying (thinking, feeling) "I'm just a parent".



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The following strategies will help you communicate in an assertive manner.

Ask for clarification.

- *Describe for me...*
- *Tell me more about...*
- *Give me an example...*

Share Information

- *Let me tell you about...*
- *Let me share with you...*

Use assertive statements.

- *I'm not sure I agree...and I want to talk about...*
- *I have a problem with... and would like to explore...*
- *I feel strongly thatand would like to brainstorm...*
- *I would like to focus on...*

Use "I" messages.

- *I get upset when...*
- *I'm angry about...*
- *I'm concerned about...*
- *I'm confused about...*

Do perception checks.

- *It seems like you...*
- *Your concern seems to be...*
- *I am feeling that you...*
- *You appear to be...*

Paraphrase your understanding of the conversation.

- *What I think you mean is...*
- *I understand you to say...*
- *Do you mean...*
- *Let me be sure I'm understanding...*
- *So, in other words...*
- *What I hear you saying is...*

Use "softeners" when making statements.

- *I'm curious about...*
- *I'm wondering if...*
- *What would happen if...*
- *It would help me if...*
- *Can you tell me the reason for...*
- *Can you help me understand why...*

Ask "super questions".

- *Compared to what?*
- *Specifically, what?*
- *Specifically, how?*
- *Specifically, why?*
- *All?*
- *Should?*
- *Never?*
- *Can you show me the policy in writing?*