THRIVE EMERGE

Toolkit of the Month

Tools to Support You in Navigating School Communication

Below are practical, parent-friendly resources to help you better understand, prepare for, and engage in school communication with confidence.

Understanding the Basics

504 Plans vs. IEPs: What's the Difference?

A clear breakdown of eligibility, services, and what each plan actually provides in the school setting.

Use this when you're unsure what support your child qualifies for or what to ask for.

Feature	504 Plan	IEP
Purpose	Access to learning	Specialized instruction
Provides	Accommodations	Goals + services + accommodations
Eligibility	Disability impacts access	Disability impacts learning progress
Example	Extended time	Reading intervention + measurable goals

Accommodations vs. Modifications Guide

Learn the difference between changing *how* your child learns vs. *what* they are expected to learn -- and why that distinction matters.

Helpful for understanding what is being proposed in meetings.

- **Accommodations (HOW a child learns):**
  - Extra time on tests
  - Preferential seating
  - Movement breaks
  - Visual supports
- **Modifications (WHAT a child learns):**
  - Reduced assignment length
  - Adjusted reading level materials
  - Altered grading expectations

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Making Sense of Evaluations

Parent Guide to Psychoeducational Reports
Simplifies common testing terms, scores, and recommendations so you can understand the "story" behind the data.
Great to review before or after receiving an evaluation.

Quick Translation Guide:

- **Standard Score (SS):** Average = 100
- **Percentile:** Comparison to peers (e.g., 25th percentile = below most peers)
- **Processing Speed:** How quickly your child completes tasks
- **Working Memory:** Ability to hold and use information

Focus on patterns -- not just numbers: strengths, challenges, and recommendations.

Key Questions to Ask After an Evaluation
A structured list of questions to help you translate results into actionable supports.
Use this to guide follow-up conversations with schools or providers.

- "What does this look like in the classroom?"
- "Which recommendations should we prioritize?"
- "How will we measure success?"
- "What can be implemented right away?"

Communication & Advocacy Tools

School Meeting Preparation Checklist
Helps you organize your thoughts, goals, and concerns before entering a meeting.
Reduces overwhelm and keeps conversations focused.

- My main concern is: _____
- My child struggles with: _____
- What has helped: _____
- My goal for this meeting: _____
- Questions I want answered:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Email Templates for Parent Communication

Sample scripts for clear, professional communication without second-guessing.

Requesting a Meeting

Hello [Name],
I'd like to schedule a time to discuss my child's current supports and progress. I'm particularly interested in reviewing what is working well and where adjustments may be needed.
Please let me know your availability.
Thank you,
[Your Name]

Following Up After a Meeting

Hello [Name],
Thank you for meeting with me. I wanted to summarize what we discussed to ensure we're aligned:

- [Key point]
- [Next step]
  Please let me know if I missed anything.
  Thank you,
  [Your Name]

Documentation Tracker

A simple system for keeping records of communication and decisions.
Essential for staying organized and protecting your child's support plan.

Track:

- Date
- Who you spoke with
- Summary of conversation
- Agreed next steps

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Advocacy Skill-Building

Collaborative Language Guide
Examples of how to phrase questions and concerns in a way that keeps conversations productive and solution-focused.
Especially helpful if you worry about sounding "too pushy" or unclear.

Instead of: *"This isn't working."*
→ Try: *"Can you help me understand how this support is being implemented?"*

Instead of: *"My child needs more help."*
→ Try: *"What additional supports could we consider to address this challenge?"*

Understanding Your Child's Educational Rights
Overview of parent rights within school systems, including access to evaluations, meetings, and services.
Empowers you to advocate from a place of knowledge, not guesswork.

You have the right to:

- Request an evaluation
- Receive copies of reports
- Participate in meetings
- Ask questions and request clarification
- Disagree and request revisions

Real-Life Application

What Effective Accommodations Look Like in the Classroom
Examples of supports in action (not just on paper), including executive functioning, sensory needs, and attention differences.
Helps you visualize what to ask for -- and what "working" actually means.

Instead of accepting "extra time," ask:

- When is it provided?
- How much extra time?
- Who ensures it happens consistently?

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When to Request a Meeting (and What Kind)
Guidance on recognizing when informal communication isn't enough and a formal meeting is needed.
Supports timely advocacy instead of waiting until challenges escalate.

Request a meeting when:

- Your child is consistently struggling
- Supports aren't being implemented
- You receive new evaluation results
- Communication becomes unclear

Parent Support & Perspective

Reframing Advocacy: From Conflict to Collaboration
A mindset guide to help you approach school communication with confidence and clarity.
Supports emotional regulation and long-term relationship building.

- You're not "questioning the school" → You're seeking clarity
- You're not "asking for too much" → You're identifying needs
- You're not "being difficult" → You're being specific

Common Parent Experiences (and What They Mean)
Validates challenges like feeling dismissed, confused, or overwhelmed -- and provides direction on what to do next.
Reminds you that you're not alone in this process.

If you've ever:

- Left a meeting feeling confused
- Wondered what your child actually receives
- Felt unsure what to ask

That's not a failure -- it's a sign you need clearer information and support.