

## Parents and Schools: Working Together to Achieve Success

It is hard for parents to watch their child struggle and fail. It is hard for their teachers too. Out of frustration, parents and teachers sometimes cast blame. This hurts rather than helps the child.

Many children have problems at school. They deserve parents and teachers who take charge and work together. You are your child's best supporter.

If your child is having trouble in school:

- **Get to know his teacher and his school.** Visit his school. Become a school volunteer.
- **Ask the school to evaluate your child.** He may have a disability. Put your request in writing. Keep a copy for your records.
- **Partner with your child's school.** Tell them what you observe. Avoid a battle.
- **Listen with respect.** State your point of view clearly and calmly. Consider the school's solutions for helping your child. Try the services offered.
- **Look for steady progress, not overnight miracles.** If you do not see progress, ask questions. Look for other answers to address your child's needs. Do not assume that the school is always right.
- **You know your child best.** Explain in detail your child's special needs. The school may not know all her needs. Ask the school to tell you what they observe.
- **Tell the school if your child needs a change.** Be prepared to give your reasons. Be firm. Stay friendly and concerned.



- **Get advice from as many good sources as you can find.** Consult doctors, therapists and others who work with your child. Know your child's rights by law.
- **Respond to the school in a day or two when they request a meeting, such as an IEP.** Prepare for this meeting. Arrive on time. Ask the school for another date if you need more time to prepare. Do this ahead of time, not at the last minute.
- **Ask the school for copies of reports on your child.** Get them before you attend a meeting with the school. Read the reports. If it is hard to understand the evaluation reports, ask a trusted advisor to help explain them.
- **Never sign a blank form.** Always know what you are signing.
- **Look to the future.** Never give up. Teachers change each year. Next year, your child may achieve more success with another teacher.

An advocate can help a parent work with the school. Family Matters' Parent Training and Information Center supports parents of children with disabilities. Call them: 1-866-436-7842 or 1-217-347-0880 voice/TTY. Their e-mail address is [info@fmpctic.org](mailto:info@fmpctic.org).

Parents and school districts can disagree on how to educate a child with disabilities. For questions, you can contact:

Office of Civil Rights, Region V  
U.S. Dept. of Education  
111 N. Canal St., Rm. 1053  
Chicago, IL. 60606-7204

 [www.ed.gov/office/OCR](http://www.ed.gov/office/OCR)

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help.

1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week.