

STARTING THE SCHOOL YEAR ON THE RIGHT FOOT

HOW TO HAVE POSITIVE
PARENT AND SCHOOL
INTERACTIONS



OLENTANGY SCHOOLSSM
Flourish Here.



WHAT IS A PARENT MENTOR?

- An Olentangy parent of a child with special needs.
- Has **experience navigating** the special education system.
- Helps parents **understand and obtain services** for students.
- Helps the schools understand **family perspective** and foster **relationships**.

Our purpose is to help parents of children with disabilities effectively navigate the educational system in **partnership** with the school district personnel, with the expectation that **students with disabilities** be ensured an **appropriate and meaningful education**.



THE VISION

School Districts choose to implement the **Parent Mentor Program** to promote necessary and effective **communication** by providing **information and support** to families about special education issues and providing a mechanism to convey the **family perspective** back to the system. Parent Mentors are in place to provide the necessary **support and resources, free of charge**, to families of children with disabilities and the professionals who serve them.



HOW TO CONTACT YOUR PARENT MENTOR?

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HOW CAN YOUR PARENT MENTOR HELP YOU?

- Bridging - **communication**, collaborative **partnerships**, and **conflict resolution**
- Guiding families through the special education process, helping to understand rights and responsibilities. **Attending meetings** at the request of parents or staff.
- **Training** - workshops, training and support groups based on needs of families and professionals in the community.
- **Community resources** - understanding district programs and support services outside of school, like Delaware County Board of Developmental Disabilities, therapy providers, adapted activities, and opportunities for relationship building



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Check out the [Parent Mentor Program](#) on the Olenangy Schools website under the Pupil Services Department for more information on the program, [past newsletters](#), and trainings available.
- Monthly Parent Mentor [Newsletters](#) are emailed to all parents (with emails listed in PowerSchool) who have a child with an IEP or a Section 504 plan.
- Virtual trainings for parents, called the [Special Education Resource Series](#), are held monthly and past trainings are housed on the website.

We welcome your feedback on training topics, support group needs, or other resources and connections we can provide for you.



TIPS FOR STAYING CONNECTED

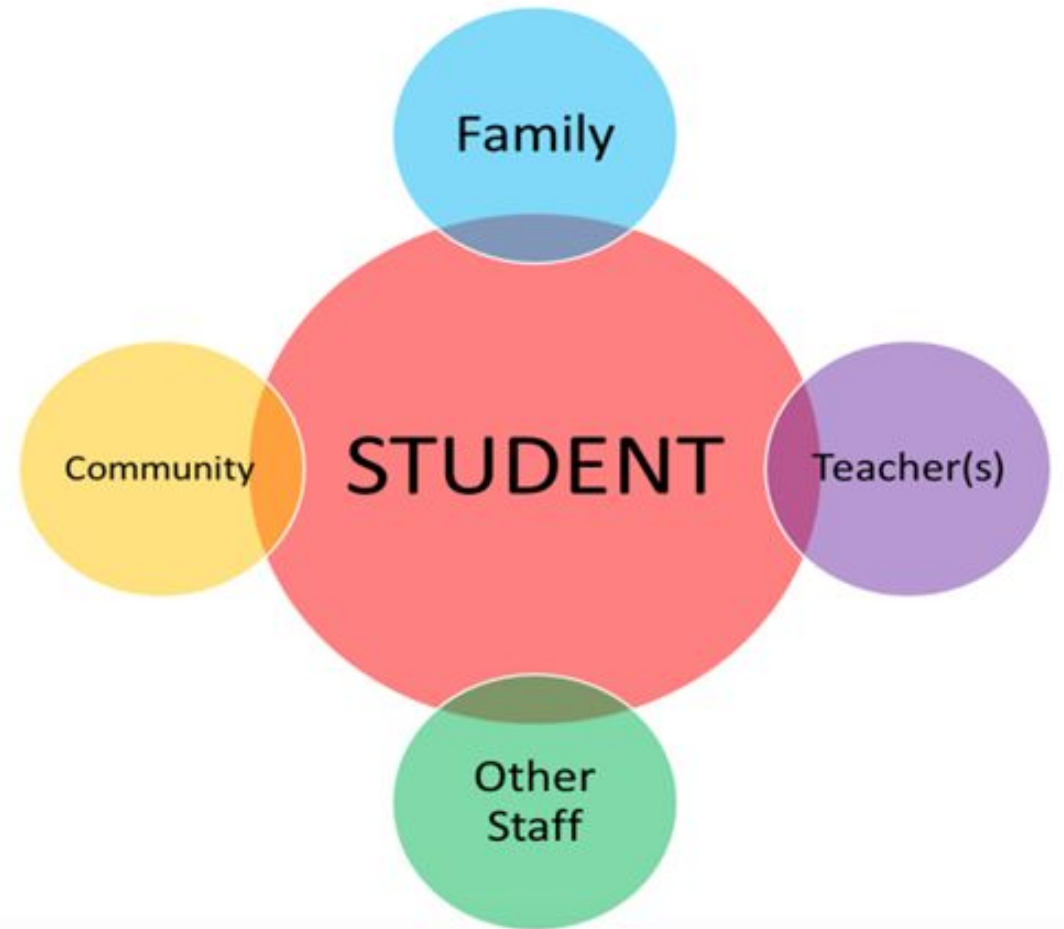
- Schoology
 - [Schoology](#) is a learning management system (LMS) that has all the tools Olentangy uses to create engaging content, design lessons, and assess student understanding.
- PowerSchool
 - [PowerSchool](#) is a web-based student information system that provides a full range of features needed by administrators at the district and school level to manage student information, a portal for teachers to enter classroom-specific data, and portals to foster communication between the school and parents and students.
- [Accessing IEP Quarterly Progress Reports](#)
- Report Cards
 - [How to Access Elementary Report Cards](#)
 - [How to Access Secondary Report Cards](#)

Keep in mind that having your child on an IEP or a Section 504 Plan does not equal an “A”.



POSITIVE PARENT AND SCHOOL INTERACTIONS

Parent and School Partnerships are focused on setting joint goals for a student and ensuring consistency and continuity in how these goals are achieved across home and school. Effective partnerships will benefit from clear and open communication with a focus on shared goals, shared language and shared supports.



DEVELOPING POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Developing effective partnerships across homes and schools first requires an understanding and belief that parents and teachers are doing the best they can within the constraints of policy, time/life demands, knowledge, experiences and personal or work based resources.



FORMING A TRUE PARTNERSHIP

- Baggage has to be left at the door.
- What happened last year or even last week cannot be the focus of the meeting.
- The past must remain in the past, however, we can learn from past mistakes.
- Understanding the other person's point of view is critical.
- Both parents and professionals need to make an effort to understand each other's role and point of view.



WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH TELL US ABOUT POSITIVE PARENT AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS?

The Benefits for *Students*:

- More positive attitudes towards school
- Improved behavior
- Increased homework completion
- Greater participation in school activities
- Improved school attendance
- Higher academic achievement



WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH TELL US ABOUT POSITIVE PARENT AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS?

The Benefits for *Parents*:

- Enhanced parental confidence
- More positive experiences with teachers and schools
- Improved communication with children
- Increased confidence in their role of supporting homework completion



WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH TELL US ABOUT POSITIVE PARENT AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS?

The Benefits for *Teachers*:

- Increased job satisfaction
- Improved communication and positive relationships with families
- Increased confidence in management of behavioral and learning challenges



TEACHER TIPS FOR ESTABLISHING A POSITIVE PARENT AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

- Pay attention to how you communicate.
- Encourage your colleagues to create a school-based culture of advocacy.
- Prove you are competent by using evidence-based approaches to resolve academic and behavior challenges.
- Respect the child, parents, and teachers by talking about expectations and outcomes.
- Take the extra step to prove your commitment.
- Expect trust.



COMMUNICATION

- 7% of meaning is in the words that are spoken
- 38% of meaning is paralinguistic or paraverbal (tone, volume, and rhythm of speech)
- 55% of meaning is nonverbal



WHAT IS EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION?

- Effective communication is about more than just exchanging information.
- It's about understanding the emotion and intentions behind the information.
- As well as being able to clearly convey a message, you need to also *listen* in a way that gains the full meaning of what's being said and makes the other person feel heard and understood.




COMMON BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

What's stopping you from communicating effectively?

- Stress and out-of-control emotion
- Lack of focus
- Inconsistent body language
- Negative body language





When you talk you are only repeating something you already know. But, if you listen you may learn something new.

Dalai Lama XIV

quote fancy



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

More than just the words you use, effective communication combines a set of 4 skills:

1. Engaged listening
2. Nonverbal communication
3. Managing stress in the moment
4. Asserting yourself in a respectful way



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILL 1: ENGAGED LISTENING

- less about talking and more about listening
- not just understanding the words or the information being communicated, but also understanding the emotions the speaker is trying to convey
- engaged listening versus simply hearing
- listen—when you're engaged with what's being said—you'll hear the subtle intonations in someone's voice that tell you how that person is feeling and the emotions they're trying to communicate
- not only will you better understand the other person, you'll also make that person feel heard and understood, which can help build a stronger, deeper connection between you



TIPS FOR BECOMING AN ENGAGED LISTENER

- Focus fully on the speaker.
- Favor your right ear.
- Avoid interrupting or trying to redirect the conversation to your concerns.
- Show your interest in what's being said.
- Try to set aside judgment.
- Provide feedback.



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILL 2: NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

93% of all communication is nonverbal

The way you look, listen, move, and react to another person tells them more about how you're feeling than words alone ever can. Nonverbal communication, or body language, includes facial expressions, body movement and gestures, eye contact, posture, the tone of your voice, and even your muscle tension and breathing.

Developing the ability to understand and use nonverbal communication can help you connect with others, express what you really mean, navigate challenging situations, and build better relationships at home and work.



TIPS FOR NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Personal space: distance that includes the social zone, personal zone, and intimate zone
- Body language: postures, gestures, facial expressions, and movement
- Communication through touch: physical contact (need permission first)
- Listening with empathy:
 - Remain non judgemental.
 - Give your undivided attention.
 - Listen to facts and feelings.
 - Allow time for silence and reflection.
 - Paraphrase what you understand.



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILL 3: MANAGING STRESS IN THE MOMENT

Communicate effectively by staying calm under pressure:

- Use stalling tactics to give yourself time to think. Ask for a question to be repeated or for clarification of a statement before you respond.
- Pause to collect your thoughts. Silence isn't necessarily a bad thing—pausing can make you seem more in control than rushing your response.
- Make one point and provide an example or supporting piece of information. If your response is too long or you waffle about a number of points, you risk losing the listener's interest. Follow one point with an example and then gauge the listener's reaction to tell if you should make a second point.
- Deliver your words clearly. In many cases, how you say something can be as important as what you say. Speak clearly, maintain an even tone, and make eye contact. Keep your body language relaxed and open.
- Wrap up with a summary and then stop. Summarize your response and then stop talking, even if it leaves a silence in the room. You don't have to fill the silence by continuing to talk.



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILL 4: RESPECT

Regarding each other with esteem and show that through words and actions:

- Honor Cultural Diversity
- Affirm Strengths
- Treat Others with Dignity



THE CHALLENGES OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Time
- Trust
- Different expectations or goals



TIME

In the typical school day there is limited opportunity for communication and discussion.

Unfortunately time challenges can prevent the formation of positive relationships, with dialogue between parents and teachers initiated in times of high stress (e.g. challenges with performance or behavior) rather than throughout a child's educational experience.

Establish a mutually beneficial time and method to communicate in advance.



TRUST

“...having confidence in someone else’s reliability, judgment, word, and action to care for and not harm the entrusted person.”



DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS OR GOALS

Parents and teachers may have different expectations and goals for a student.

Parents and teachers have different experiences of a child and see the child's learning and behavior in two different contexts – home and school.

The best outcomes for a student will result from honest sharing of information and mutual goal setting that recognizes the strengths, challenges and personal motivations of the student.

It is in recognizing and addressing these barriers that parents and teachers can actively problem solve and develop strong and sustainable partnerships.



TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

- Create a collaborative environment. An important component of parents and professionals working together is making sure there are **no surprises**.
- Always keep each other informed. Communicate whenever and however possible.
- Be **HONEST**. This is not a game where one side is against the other. When there is a power struggle taking place the child **ALWAYS** loses.
- Avoid blame and seek solutions. The last, but not least, part of parents and professionals working together is to **focus on the student**. If both professionals and parents are focusing on the student there will always be a workable resolution to any problem or situation.



RECORD KEEPING TIPS

- Send a follow up email after a phone conversation or face-to-face talk with a teacher or a parent.
- Keep a folder on your computer with the most current ETR, IEP (including amendments), and progress reports. This makes them handy to forward on to others as needed. Make sure to download and save upon graduation.
- For our middle & high school families: email the classroom teacher with any concerns and cc the IS or case manager.



UNITY by Ray A. Lingenfelter

I dreamed I stood in a studio
and watched two sculptors there.

The clay they used
was a young child's mind
and they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher
and the tools she used
were books and music and art.

One was a parent
with a guiding hand
and a gentle, loving heart.



And when at last their work was done,
they were proud of what they had wrought.

For the things they had worked into the child
could never be sold or bought.

And each agreed
she would have failed
if she had worked alone

for behind the parent stood the school
and behind the teacher
stood the home.





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THANK YOU