

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

Be partners—Relationships move at the speed of trust

RESEARCH: Strong relationships between families and teachers can help educators become allies as families advocate on behalf of their children.

Some families are not aware of their rights when it comes to child-school advocacy and may report they are at a disadvantage or don't feel welcome at school. They may face communication barriers, like educational jargon.

TIPS FROM THE FIELD:

Enter the conversation with care and concern for the well-being of children and families.

Make room for families to voice their opinions and wishes regarding their children's education.

Think about where families are coming from and what fears they may have as they move forward.

Help families decode education jargon.



Sears, J. A., Peters, B. L., Beidler, A. M. S., & Murawski, W. W. (2020). Using Relationships to Advocate With, For, and To Families. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 53(3), 194–204. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059920982373>

"Family Engagement: Collaborating with Families of Students with Disabilities." *IRIS Center*, <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/fam>

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Meet them where they are—advocating looks different for all families

RESEARCH: It is important for schools to recognize and be inclusive of the different ways families advocate for their children based on their cultures, backgrounds, and values.

TIPS FROM THE FIELD:

Encourage families to advocate in ways they see fit—there is more than one way to advocate.

Trust how families decide to advocate—meet them where they are.

Seek out, recognize, and understand families' perspectives.



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Show families you have the same goals—to help their children thrive

RESEARCH: To advocate with families, teachers need to help families recognize their own power and voice and provide opportunities for collaboration.

Remember, a child's family is the connective tissue between home and school and from year to year in a child's education.

TIPS FROM THE FIELD:

Remember that all families love their children and will do what they can to support them.

Ask families how you can show up as an ally.

Share and celebrate special moments and successes.



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