

POPARD Family-School Liaison Workshop:
Effective Collaboration Between Home and School
February 2024

BENEFITS OF HOME-SCHOOL COLLABORATION

What Does Research Tell us?

(Mulvihill, 2015)

Benefits for Students	Benefits for Parents	Benefits for Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More positive attitudes towards school • Improved behaviour • Increased homework completion • Greater participation in school activities • Improved school attendance • Higher academic achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced parental confidence • More positive experiences with teachers and schools • Improved communication with children • Increased confidence in their role of supporting homework completion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased job satisfaction • Improved communication and positive relationships with families • Increased confidence in management of behavioural and learning challenges

What Can Be Challenging About Collaboration?

Trust

- Few opportunities to communicate
- Negative past experiences
- Tendency for communication to be initiated in times of student stress

Tips to Overcome This Challenge

- ▶ Find someone at the school that you and your child can trust
- ▶ Offer as much positive support and resources that you can
- ▶ Remember this is only a one year commitment
- ▶ Rely on the members of the team that you can work with
- ▶ Don't be afraid to express concerns

Time

- Limited opportunity for communication and discussion.
- Many parents work during school hours and may be unable to attend all school based activities or partake in school based voluntary opportunities.
- Teachers contend with classroom based management, limited planning opportunities and the demands of curriculum goals, leaving little time for dialogue with parents during school hours.

Tips to Overcome This Challenge

- ▶ Communication is key. Decide on an ideal mode of communication and an ideal time for communication. Communicate openly and regularly.
- ▶ Where opportunities for face-to-face interactions are limited, parents and teachers can creatively work around such constraints and make use of many modes of communication including phone calls, emails, video messages or communication books.
- ▶ Don't wait for challenges to arise in order to initiate communication.

Expectations

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

Tips to Overcome This Challenge

- ▶ Parents must be honest about your hopes and concerns, your child's strengths and challenges, and your own strengths and limitations. This helps teachers understand your child and identify the strategies and supports that might set your child up for success.
- ▶ Teachers must be transparent, honest and respectful in their interactions. Provide clear examples for parents from the school setting.
- ▶ Parents and teachers should be honest with each other about their own strengths and limitations and seek support as necessary.

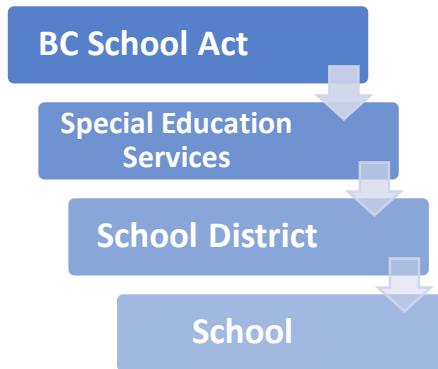
Parents play a vital role in the education of their children!

Role of Parents:

Support the education of their children by enrolling them in a public or independent school; consult with school staff with respect to their child's educational program; have an understanding of school rules, policies, and procedures and be committed to partnership.

RIGHTS, ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF HOME AND SCHOOL

How Policy Informs Schools:



Important to know:

- A policy using the word “must” is most powerful
- The words “may” or “should” make it a guideline rather than policy

BC School Act

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/legislation-policy/legislation/schoollaw/revisedstatutescontents.pdf>

Access

- All school aged children have the right to access education.
- There are a minimum hours of instruction that must be offered to students, which differs by grade level.
https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/314_2012
 - Sometimes, a collaborative decision is made by parents/caregivers and the school to reduce the number of hours when this is in the best interest of the child.

Information

- Parents/guardians have the right to be informed about their child’s attendance, behaviour and progress in school.
- If you request, you may receive a copy of all your child’s records.
- You may request and be given a copy of the School Plan.

Consultation

- You may consult with your child’s teacher, principal, vice principal or director of instruction with respect to your child’s education.
- If requested by the teacher, principal, vice principal or director of instruction you may need to consult.

Appeal

- You have the right to appeal a decision that was made by a school board employee, which significantly impacts the education, health or safety of your child.

Confidentiality

- The information in a child's records must be confidential and the privacy of the child and family must be ensured by written procedures.

Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines (April 2016):
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/inclusive/special_ed_policy_manual.pdf

This manual includes information on:

- Policy
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Developing an IEP
- Special Considerations - Services
- Special Needs Categories
- Provincial Resource Programs

District Level Roles and Responsibilities

- Spend time on your school district website. Helpful information to look for:
 - Student Support Services / Inclusive Education Services
 - School District Staff and Professionals
 - School District Plan
 - Parent Information
- Examples of district-level staff that may be included in your district:
 - District Principal of Learning Support, District Resource teacher, District Counsellors, School Psychologists, Speech Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Behavior Specialists, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teachers, Vision Impaired District Resource Teachers
- Examples of district-level programs/services that may be included in your district:

- Academic Support, Behaviour Support, Inclusion Support, Alternative Programs, Gifted Programs, Early Learning, Literacy Team, Transition Team, Social-Emotional Learning, Urgent Intervention

How Does Funding Work?

- The Ministry of Education provides supplementary funding to school districts based on certain categories of students with disabilities and complex learning needs.
- Ministry of Education category for Autism Spectrum Disorder: “G”
- Funds are not attached to individual students, rather, school districts pool the funds received and decide how to allocate those funds at the district level and school level.
- Principals decided how to allocate resources and funding within their school.
- Remember, regardless of funding or category, all students have the right to the accommodations and supports they need to equitably access their education (School Act)

School Level Roles and Responsibilities:

Principal - responsible for the allocation of resources and implementation of educational programs; facilitate collaborative efforts of team members at the school; allocations resources within the school.

Case Manager - responsible for coordinating a student’s educational program, which may include reviewing student info to support planning for the IEP, liaising with community supports, attending school-based team meetings, making referrals, etc.

Teachers - responsible for designing, supervising, and assessing the educational program and progress for students; collaborates with resource personnel at the school; responsible for evaluating and reporting on the progress of the student.

Educational Assistants - under the direction of a teacher, an education assistant may play a key role in implementing an educational program; may also assist in the collection of data for the purpose of evaluating student progress.

School-Based Team

- Small group of school-based personnel which often includes the school principal, a learning assistance or resource teacher, a classroom teacher, and other professionals (i.e. school counselor, SLP, etc.)
- Formal role as a problem-solving team
- Assist classroom teachers to develop and implement instructional and/or management strategies and to coordinate support resources for students
- Depending on need, referrals to district-level staff may be made here

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

4 A's of Collaboration

(Christenson & Sheridan, 2001)

Approach



Mutually shared goals.

Belief that parental involvement is paramount.

Belief that working as partners will benefit the child's learning.

Attitudes



Our time together is valuable. We are flexible, non-blaming, and we are focused on problem solving. The student is at the centre.

Atmosphere



Open, trusting, honest, engaged listening and communication.

Actions



Establish clear roles, responsibilities, procedures for mutual support to foster student development and learning.

Communication is Key!

Communication Method

- Set up a system at the beginning of the year that works for both.
- Ask your child's classroom teacher or learning assistance teacher:
 - *"When is the next time that we will connect about progress?"*
This may be the next reporting period in the school year; or you may be setting up an additional meeting to discuss your child's progress.
 - *"What is the best way to reach you if something comes up?"*
Consider the best method (i.e., email, phone, after school chat) and the best time.

Home-School Communication Book

- For most students, **agenda** serves the purpose of home-school communication to:
 - provide homework information.
- For some students, a **dedicated home-school communication book** can be put in place to:

- support the student's communication at home and at school; (This may include information about daily activities, special or fun events, playmate or peer interactions, and any highlights of the day.)
- facilitate the transfer of information from home to school (e.g. student didn't sleep well, didn't eat breakfast; missed medication, had a seizure);
- facilitate the transfer of information from school to home (e.g. special events, field trips, "hot lunch" days, successes and challenges)

What to Do If Concerns Arise

1. Communicate with Classroom Teacher

Share your concern with your child's teacher through your established communication system (i.e., in-person chat, a formal meeting, or an email). In some cases, it may be most helpful to write an email summarizing the issue, list the steps already taken, and communicate the urgency of the matter.

2. Communicate with Principal

If the parent/caregiver and classroom teacher can not come to a collaborative solution, or if the matter is outside the scope of the teacher, speak to the School Principal. Connect through email to set up a meeting. The Principal may request that the Learner Support teacher be a part of this meeting, depending on the concern.

3. Communicate with District Level Staff

If a collaborative solution can not be found within the school, or if the matter is outside the scope of school-level personnel, supports may be accessed at the District Level by the school or by the parent/caregiver.

4. When all previous steps have been exhausted, further action can include Appeal to the Board of Education or Appeal to the Provincial Superintendent of Appeals.

If a decision of an employee of a board significantly affects the education, health or safety of a student, the parent of the student or the student may, within reasonable time from the date that the parent or student was informed of the decision, appeal that decision to the board (Section 11(2) of School Act).

Parent Advocacy Resources

- Inclusion BC - <https://inclusionbc.org/>
- BCEdAccess - <https://bcedaccess.com/>
- Family Support Institute - <https://familysupportbc.com/>
- Autism Community Training (ACT) - <https://www.actcommunity.ca/education/videos/the-essentials-of-advocacy-a-parents-guide>

For more information, contact POPARD Family-School Liaison Service:

Email: fsl@autismoutreach.ca Phone: 604-952-4994