

7 Conversation Starters

An adversarial parent-teacher relationship benefits no one. The key to collaboration is clear communication—without any blame or hostility. Use these sentence starters to begin developing a healthy rapport with your child's new teachers.

WHAT YOU SHOULD SAY	WHY YOU SHOULD SAY IT
“Thank you for...”	Starting a meeting by thanking the teacher sets a positive tone. Think about a time your child told you the teacher helped him or was supportive. Let the teacher know that you appreciate her efforts. If you can't think of a reason to thank the teacher, start with, “Thank you for talking with me today.”
“I am concerned about...”	Frame your concerns around you rather than your child or the teacher. “I am concerned that Matt is falling behind in math,” sounds better than, “Matt isn't doing well in math,” or “You should be doing more to help Matt with his math.” Using “I am concerned...” opens up a conversation about how you can work together to improve areas in which your child is struggling.
“Do you have any suggestions about...”	You know your child best; however, the teacher might have some ideas on how you can help your son or daughter in class. The teacher has the opportunity to observe your child at school. Asking for suggestions lets the teacher know that you respect her opinion.
“What do you see as my child's strengths?”	Conversations with teachers sometimes devolve into negative talks, especially if your child is struggling or misbehaving in school. Focus on your child's positive aspects to release tension and allow both of you to look at the situation from a different perspective.
“I've noticed that my child responds to...”	Share your perspective with teachers and give them information that could be helpful. Wording this as your point of view allows you to give input without being accusatory or making the teacher feel defensive.
“His IEP provides for _____. How do you implement that in the classroom?”	By using this wording, you are saying that you assume the teacher is following the IEP, instead of accusing her of not following it.
“What can I do to help?”	Whether you are asking how you can support your child's learning at home or how you can volunteer at school, the teacher will appreciate your wanting to be involved in your child's education.