

APPENDIX V – 199



PARENT ACADEMY

*Empowering Parents
Achieving Academic Excellence*

ESTABLISH, ENGAGE, EMPOWER

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Parent Toolkit

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Parent Toolkit

Positive Discipline and Communication

WHAT BLACK PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN DEVELOP THE NECESSARY POSITIVE CHILD CHARACTERISTICS

1. **Model and Teach Love and Understanding** through:
 - a. Showing and expressing satisfaction with child's characteristics and abilities, such as how child looks, talks, walks, the child's temperament, feelings, and style.
 - b. Seeking out and enjoying the company of the child.
 - c. Providing much verbal and physical appreciation for all of the child's efforts and achievements.
 - d. Being sensitive to the child's needs and viewpoints.
 - e. Finding regular chit-chat times with child to better get to know the child as a unique individual.

2. **Model and Teach Pride in Blackness** through drawing child's attention to communicating positively about:
 - a. The African heritage.
 - b. The courage and achievements of Black people.
 - c. The strengths of Black families.
 - d. The unique customs and language forms of Black Americans. Black pride is also taught by
 - e. Avoiding the disparagement of Black people and blackness, and
 - f. Helping the child to understand and cope with racism.

3. **Model and Teach Self-Discipline** involves teaching the child to learn how:
 - a. To delay receiving an immediate satisfaction in order to obtain a greater future satisfaction.
 - b. To control anger and aggression so that they work for the child and Black people rather than against them,
 - c. To be respectful and considerate of others,
 - d. To behave within the approved social guidelines of the group and society, and
 - e. To resist temptations to engage in unhealthy or illegal behaviors and life styles.

4. **Model and Teach School Skills and Study Habits** includes teaching young children
 - a. To talk, and
 - b. Talk about and appreciate differences and similarities in what they see, hear, smell, taste, touch and feel. Includes helping children learn basic school skills like reading, writing, computing, planning ahead, problem solving, and good study habits.
 - c. Working closely and cooperatively with child's school and teachers to insure a good formal education.

5. **Model and Teach Healthy Physical Habits** through:
 - a. Providing nutritious foods and beverages.
 - b. Providing healthy and sanitary living conditions.
 - c. Arranging family life to allow for ample sleep, rest, relaxation and exercise, and
 - d. Using health services for preventive checkups as well as for the treatment of illnesses and health problems.



Parent Toolkit

Understanding Your Historical and Cultural Legacy

YOUR FAMILY'S GOALS AND DREAMS: BEGINNING STEPS

Answer the following questions:

What dreams do you have for your children?

What are your goals in order to reach them?

What support do you have?

What are your next steps?



Parent Toolkit

Positive Discipline and Communication

LIFE GOALS FOR BLACK CHILDREN AND CHILD CHARACTERISTICS THAT ARE IMPORTANT FOR ACHIEVING THESE LIFE GOALS

Life Goals for Black Children

<p>Achieve Loving and Healthy Human Relationships--- with spouses, lovers, family, friends, work associates, and with their own children.</p>	<p>Achieve a Good Education---high school, college, graduate, or professional school, art or trade school education, etc.</p>	<p>Achieve a Good Job---Professional, managerial, and executive jobs; trades; arts clerical; entertainment, sports job, etc.</p>	<p>Help the Black Community--- Does job or volunteer work that helps Black people and the Black community; becomes part of organizations that advance Blacks as a group, etc.</p>	<p>Resist the Pressure of the "Street" --- Does not become part of gangs, gang warfare, delinquency, crime, pimping, prostitution, drug abuse, drug peddling, etc.</p>
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Child Characteristics That Are Necessary for Obtaining Life Goals

<p>High Self-Esteem- --Where child regards him or herself as a person of worth, and feels good about his or her own abilities, characteristics, and self.</p>	<p>Black Pride--- Where child has positive attitudes and love for Black people and blackness, and therefore, feels pride in being a Black person and a member of the Black community.</p>	<p>Self-Discipline--- Where child is able to control his/her own emotions and behavior in order to achieve positive long- and short-term goals for him/herself, for others, and for Black people as a group.</p>	<p>Good School Abilities and Study Habits--- Where child has good talking and communication skills, good reading, writing, and math skills, good abilities to plan ahead and solve problems and good study habits.</p>	<p>Healthy Physical Habits---Where child eats and drinks nutritious foods and beverages, and has good exercise, rest, relaxation and sleeping habits.</p>
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Parent Toolkit

Positive Discipline and Communication

OUR FAMILY RULES

Family Name _____

Date We Made Our Rules _____

What We Want

What We Don't Want

1. _____

3. _____

Reward _____

Penalty _____

2. _____

2. _____

Reward _____

Penalty _____

3. _____

3. _____

Reward _____

Penalty _____



Parent Toolkit

Understanding Your Historical and Cultural Legacy

In the first column list the important and positive parenting techniques your parent(s) used. Then in the next column, list the negative parenting techniques your parent(s) used.

Positive Parenting Techniques Your Parents Used	Negative Parenting Techniques Your Parents Used

After completing both columns, cross out the traits that you do not want to use.



Parent Toolkit

Positive Discipline and Communication

CHILDREN'S SELF-ESTEEM CHECKLIST

Indicators of High Self-Esteem

- ✓ Feels comfortable talking with teacher after/before class
- ✓ Makes significant choices
- ✓ Has a neat and clean appearance
- ✓ Asks questions
- ✓ Works well independently
- ✓ Smiles, laughs, and has fun
- ✓ Gets along with peers/elders
- ✓ Keeps calm when things go wrong
- ✓ Says positive things about school
- ✓ Pays attention in class
- ✓ Seeks out new activities on his/her own
- ✓ Is a leader
- ✓ Keeps busy in free time
- ✓ Appears happy
- ✓ _____ (add you own)

Indicators of Low Self-Esteem

- ✓ Depends on adults a great deal
- ✓ Has difficulty making decisions
- ✓ Has an unkempt appearance
- ✓ Constantly asking for praise
- ✓ Extremely shy
- ✓ Sucks thumb or bites nails
- ✓ Cries for no or little reason
- ✓ Always criticizing and teasing others
- ✓ Sore loser in competitive games
- ✓ Keeps to self a great deal
- ✓ Shows little or no effort
- ✓ Always bored
- ✓ School work is often sloppy and incomplete
- ✓ _____ (add you own)



Parent Toolkit

Supporting Your Child's Academic Success

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC SUCCESS: WHO SUCCEEDS?

Children with involved parents have higher academic achievement. Not only do students score higher on tests but they are more prepared to start school and have a greater likelihood of graduating.

- **School Readiness. Preschoolers whose parents are very involved with their schools score higher than their peers in all aspects of school readiness.** Compared with peers whose parents had low levels of school involvement, preschoolers whose parent were very involved with their schools had greater mastery of early basic school skills, with regard to academic, social, and behavioral aspects.¹
- **Behavior Problems. Children who have a positive relationship with their mothers when they are in kindergarten are less likely to have behavior problems and more likely to excel in later years.** A positive relationship between mother and child at the time of kindergarten was related to less likelihood of behavior problems and greater academic achievement in middle school, even when controlling for demographic variables.²
- **Academic Achievement. Children whose fathers are involved in their education have greater academic achievement.** Father's involvement in their children's education was associated with greater academic achievement for children, even when controlling for mothers' involvement.³
- **Math and Science Achievement. Children of parents who promote math and science are more likely to study those subjects later on.**

Children whose parents' positive attitudes toward math and science were reflected in the toys they purchased and activities they engaged in with them were more likely to subsequently be involved in those arenas.⁴

- **High School Graduation.** Youths whose parents are highly involved in their education during elementary school are more likely to graduate from high school, complete high-school requirements, or complete a higher grade in high school. Students whose teachers reported higher levels of parental involvement were more likely to graduate high-school, to complete highschool (via graduation or GED) than peers whose parents were not so involved, and they were more likely to have completed a higher grade in high school. The more years a parent was involved, the greater was this association with grade completion.⁵
- **Academic Enrollment.** High school students whose parents are highly involved and have high expectations for them are more likely to enroll in an academic program and complete core courses. Compared with peers of similar socio-economic backgrounds, those whose parents were more highly involved and had high educational expectations were more likely to enroll in an academic program and more likely to complete credits in mathematics, science, and English.⁶
- **Academic Achievement for Low-Income Students.** Low-income children whose parents are involved with their school activities tend to exhibit higher levels of academic achievement. According to both teachers' and parents' reports, parental involvement in school activities was associated with greater academic achievement from kindergarten through mid-adolescence.⁷
- **Academic Achievement for Minority Students.** Minority students whose parents are highly involved with their education tend to do better in school than peers of less involved parents. Among African-American, Latino, and Asian- American students, greater parental involvement was associated with higher levels of academic achievement including, grades, standardized test scores, teachers' reports, and academic behavior.⁸

- **Academic Achievement for African-American Males. African-American males with involved parents are more likely to succeed in school than peers of less involved parents.** African-American males whose parents had an authoritarian parenting style, incorporated messages of cultural heritage, and were involved in their schoolwork were more likely to succeed in school than peers who experienced different parenting practices.⁹
- **Academic Achievement among Mexican- American Students. Mexican-American students tend to have higher grades if their parents more closely monitor their extracurricular activities and their families are involved with their school.** For first-, second-, and third-generation high-school students of Mexican descent (based on their parents' and their own place of birth), those whose parents more closely monitored their extracurricular activities and whose families were more involved with their schools tended to have higher grades.¹⁰

Source: www.familyfacts.org



Parent Toolkit

Supporting Your Child's Academic Success

How Well Do You Support Your Child's Learning?

Circle either "Yes" or "No" for each of the questions listed below.

Parenting

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----|----|
| 1. | Have you identified a regular time and place in your home for your child to do homework. | Yes | No |
| 2. | Do you monitor your child's homework? | Yes | No |
| 3. | Do you monitor your child's television viewing habits? | Yes | No |
| 4. | Do you ensure that your child has excellent attendance at school? | Yes | No |
| 5. | Have you discussed with your child the importance of a good education? | Yes | No |
| 6. | Did you attend Open House or Back-To-School Night at your child's school? | Yes | No |
| 7. | Do you support and reinforce the school's discipline plan? | Yes | No |
| 8. | Do you support your child's learning by providing nutritious meals and adequate time for sleep? | Yes | No |

Learning at Home

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|----|
| 9. | Do you read to your young child? If your child is older, do you encourage reading by paying attention to what your child reads as well as how often he/she reads? | Yes | No |
| 10. | Do you hold your child responsible for completing all assignments on time and to the best of his/her ability? | Yes | No |
| 11. | Are you knowledgeable about what information and skills your child should master at his/her grade level or in his/her major subject areas? | Yes | No |

How Involved Are You With Your Child's School?

Volunteering

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|----|
| 12. | Did you sign a written parental involvement pledge and volunteer to help teachers, administrators, students and other parents? | Yes | No |
|-----|---|-----|----|

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|----|
| 13. | Were you a class parent, telephone tree coordinator, or a volunteer who provided parents with needed information? | Yes | No |
| 14. | Were you a part of parent patrols or other activities to increase the safety and operation of your child's school and programs? | Yes | No |

Decision Making

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|----|
| 15. | Have you attended at least one PTA, PTO, or other support group meeting this year? | Yes | No |
| 16. | Have you worked on school-based management committees, district level councils and/or committees on issues concerning your schools? | Yes | No |
| 17. | Did you assist in providing information on school or local district elections for school representatives? | Yes | No |

Community Involvement

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|----|
| 18. | Have you attended at least one school program? (examples are an awards assembly, a play, an athletic event, or a school party.) | Yes | No |
| 19. | Are you a model of "good sportsmanship" when attending school and community events? | Yes | No |
| 20. | Do you insist that your child exhibit good sportsmanship at all times? | Yes | No |
| 21. | Do you encourage your child to participate in volunteer projects which serve the community? | Yes | No |

How Familiar Are You With School Information?

Communicating

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|----|
| 22. | Have you read the student code of conduct and/or discipline policy? | Yes | No |
| 23. | Do you regularly read the school newsletter? | Yes | No |
| 24. | Are you familiar with the extra services provided at your child's school? (examples are speech therapy, resource help for gifted students, and counseling.) | Yes | No |
| 25. | Do you make yourself available for conferences requested by your child's teacher? | Yes | No |
| 26. | Have you had at least one parent-teacher conference with the teacher(s) of your child? | Yes | No |
| 27. | Do you initiate contact with your child's teacher or principal just to show your support? | Yes | No |
| 28. | Are you aware of your child's academic strengths and weaknesses? | Yes | No |
| 29. | Do you ensure that your child takes courses to prepare him/her for a chosen career path? | Yes | No |
| 30. | Are you familiar with the grading scale used on your child's report card? | Yes | No |

NOTE: For those items that you circled 'no', doing what you can to change your response to 'yes', will increase your level of parent involvement.



Parent Toolkit

Supporting Your Child's Academic Success

READING WITH YOUR CHILD

The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.

- Set aside a time to read together every night or every other night.
- Sometimes, take turns reading, paragraph-by-paragraph, or page by page. This is a good way to read books that your child is unfamiliar with or one where he/she misses three or more words per page. If your child likes to read alone, let him/her. If he/she likes you to take a turn, do it. Remember that this should be an enjoyable time for both you and your child.
- Find a book that interests your child. If the book is too difficult for her/him to read, read it to her/him and then discuss the pictures together. If the book seems too easy, let her/him read it anyway; this will help breed confidence and build interest.
- If you can get anyone else in the family involved in reading time, do it.
- In general, if your child struggles with a word, offer her/him hints in sounding out the first letter of the word and then asking "What word would fit here?" Also, another good strategy to teach readers is to read to the end of the sentence and then go back and reread the entire sentence and see if they know what the word is then.

However, if your child becomes frustrated with these efforts and doesn't seem to be enjoying the story or even able to pay attention to it, start by

just telling him/her words he/she doesn't know. Later, as he/she progresses, you can work through the above methods again.

- Praise, praise, praise your child's efforts. Do not criticize mistakes, even if you think he/she should not have made them. Each time you read together try to look for something specific your child does well and tell him/her what you've noticed. This can be things like sounding out a word on his/her own, reading with appropriate expression, or even just staying committed to reading time.
- After the story is over, talk about it with your child. Ask his/her opinion about characters and offer your own. Ask open-ended questions (rather than just factual) about what happened in the story including things like, "Why do you think _____ did this? What would have happened if...?"
- With older children, consider reading long books together, reading a chapter or two each night.



Parent Toolkit

Supporting Your Child's Academic Success

HOW DO PARENTS MAKE READING AND WRITING MEANINGFUL?

- Choose activities that best suit your child's interests.
- Call attention to the different types of written materials in your home such as labels, newspapers, magazines, and greeting cards.
- Point out print in the environment such as billboards, menus, signs, and names of restaurants.
- Place name cards of family members on the refrigerator. Children can use magnetic letters to spell the names underneath.
- Provide print materials such as menus, tickets, maps, and catalogues for children to use in pretend play.
- Involve children as you create a grocery list. Talk about the names of some of the letters and words as you write them.
- Help children "read" labels as they shop.
- Give them coupons and ask them to help find the items.
- Cook with children and let them help you follow the recipe.
- Ask children to help you identify cereal boxes during breakfast.
- Cut labels from snack boxes such as Teddy Grahams and glue them into a homemade book titled Snacks We Like.
- Hold up two cans of vegetables and ask, "Should we have carrots or green beans?" Point out the words for the vegetables.

MORE ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS

- Make a scrapbook together after a family event. Let children dictate what to write under the photos.
- Let children help you look up phone numbers. Talk about what you are writing as you jot down names and numbers.
- Fix a container of "office materials" for children to use. Choose from materials such as, pens, pencils, scented markers, glitter crayons, white paper, colored paper, fancy paper with designs, envelopes, hole puncher, tape dispenser, stapler, stamps, stamp pads, stickers, and scissors.
- Help children make cards for holiday and family events.
- It is important to accept and encourage all attempts from your children as they begin to write. As they practice and feel successful, they will progress at their own pace from the scribbling stage to writing recognizable letters.

- Ask a relative to be a pen pal. Children can draw pictures or copy simple words to mail to the person. Children enjoy drawing and writing when they know they will get a letter in return.
- Talk to children about the letters and words you are writing when you write a message to a family member. Encourage them to help you write part of the message.
- Encourage children to draw pictures and dictate stories to you. They enjoy seeing their words written down.



Parent Toolkit

Supporting Your Child's Academic Success

Parent–Teacher Conferences: A Tip Sheet for Parents

As a parent, you are your child's first and most important teacher. You and your child's school have something in common: You both want your child to learn and do well. When parents and teachers talk to each other, each person can share important information about your child's talents and needs. Each person can also learn something new about how to help your child. Parent–teacher conferences are a great way to start talking to your child's teachers. This tip sheet suggests ways that you can make the most of parent-teacher conferences so that everyone wins, especially your child.

What should you expect?

A two-way conversation. Like all good conversations, parent–teacher conferences are best when both people talk *and* listen. The conference is a time for you to learn about your child's progress in school: Ask to see data about your child's attendance, grades, and test scores. Find out whether your child is meeting school expectations and academic standards. This is also a time for the teacher to learn about what your child is like at home. When you tell the teacher about your child's skills, interests, needs, and dreams, the teacher can help your child more.

Emphasis on learning. Good parent–teacher conferences focus on how well the child is doing in school. They also talk about how the child can do even better. To get ready for the conversation, look at your child's homework, tests, and notices before the conference. Be sure to bring a list of questions that you would like to ask the teacher.

Opportunities and challenges. Just like you, teachers want your child to succeed. You will probably hear positive feedback about your child's progress *and* areas for improvement. Be prepared by thinking about your child's strengths and challenges beforehand. Be ready to ask questions about ways you and the teacher can help your child with some of his or her challenges.

1

What should you talk to the teacher about?

Progress. Find out how your child is doing by asking questions like: Is my child performing at grade level? How is he or she doing compared to the rest of the class? What do you see as his or her strengths? How could he or she improve?

Checklist: Before the conference

- Schedule a time to meet. If you can't go at the scheduled time, ask the teacher about other times.
- Review your child's work, grades, and progress reports.
- Talk with your child about his or her progress in school.
- Talk with others—family members, after school staff, mentors, etc.—about your child's strengths and needs.
- Make a list of questions to ask during the conference.
- Think about ways you would like to be involved in your child's learning so that you can discuss them with the teacher.

Assignments and assessments. Ask to see examples of your child’s work. Ask how the teacher gives grades.

Your thoughts about your child. Be sure to share your thoughts and feelings about your child. Tell the teacher what you think your child is good at. Explain what he or she needs more help with.

Support learning at home. Ask what you can do at home to help your child learn. Ask if the teacher knows of other programs or services in the community that could also help your child.

Support learning at school. Find out what services are available at the school to help your child. Ask how the teacher will both challenge your child and support your child when he or she needs it.

How should you follow up?

Make a plan. Write down the things that you and the teacher will each do to support your child. You can do this during the conference or after. Write down what you will do, when, and how often. Make plans to check in with the teacher in the coming months.

Schedule another time to talk. Communication should go both ways. Ask how you can contact the teacher. And don’t forget to ask how the teacher will contact you too. There are many ways to communicate—in person, by phone, notes, email. Make a plan that works for both of you. Be sure to schedule at least one more time to talk in the next few months.

Talk to your child. The parent–teacher conference is all about your child, so don’t forget to include him or her. Share with your child what you learned. Show him or her how you will help with learning at home. Ask for his or her suggestions.

“BE HEARD”

Keep these principles in mind for a great parent conference:

Best intentions assumed

Emphasis on learning

Home school collaborations

Examples and evidence

Active listening

Respect for all

Dedication to follow up



Parent Toolkit

Supporting Your Child's Academic Success

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE PLANNING PROCESS

The first parent-teacher conference of the school year provides a great opportunity for you and your child's teacher to share insights and information about him/her. At this meeting, you can develop a relationship with the teacher and present yourself as a team player in your child's education. (If your child has a learning disability and receives special education services, it's essential that you make the most of the conference with the general education teacher.) Because most teachers schedule 30 minutes or less for each conference, planning ahead can help you maximize the experience.

The Planning Process

You may have met with your child's teacher when the school year began. By the time the conference rolls around, several weeks will have passed; this means you, your child, and his teacher should all have a better sense of your child's struggles and strengths. How can you organize your comments and concerns? Here are factors to consider:

Gather Information

Ideally, you'll start preparing during the first few weeks of the school year. What should you pay attention to?

- Ask the teacher to give you information about the planned curriculum, how she assigns and evaluates work, and what her teaching philosophy is.
- Check your child's schoolwork. What is the teacher assigning? Review your child's completed and corrected work. Try to do this even if s/he does homework with a tutor or caregiver.
- Look for patterns in your child's schoolwork. What subjects (such as math or reading) seem difficult? Are certain tasks (such as writing or computing math problems) more difficult than others? Jot down examples of:
 - ongoing (carryover) problems from your child's previous school years.
 - any new struggles you see emerging.
 - improvement in areas that used to be difficult.

- Depending on the age of your child, listen to what your child says about his/her schoolwork, as well as his relationships with his teacher and classmates. Ask him/her what he thinks are the most important points to cover at the conference. Doing this will help you see things from his perspective. (If your child has a learning disability and has trouble expressing himself clearly, be patient and help him explain both his positive experiences and his struggles.)
- Note any classroom accommodations and techniques previous teachers have used to help your child succeed.

Organize and Prioritize

From the list of concerns and observations you create:

- Select the most important points to discuss with the teacher.
- Prioritize your concerns so you'll be sure to cover the most critical topics before "your time is up" at the conference.
- Summarize your top concerns on paper to take with you to the conference.

Find Out Who Gives Feedback

At least a week before the conference, ask the teacher if feedback from other educators will be included. For example, if your child:

- seems to have problems socializing with adults or students at school, is there a school staff member (counselor or mental health worker) who can give feedback?
- takes classes in art, music, or sports, will those teachers and coaches comment on his skill, talent, and progress in those areas?
- is in special education, how will his/her special education teacher give his/her report?

Asking for feedback from several people will help you and the school view your child as a "whole" person with strengths as well as needs.

Get Perspective

As the conference date draws near, remember the meeting is an opportunity for you and the teacher to collaborate. Remember that you're the expert about your child, while the teacher is the expert on teaching kids at his grade level. You'll both come to the table with ideas and opinions. Remember, too, that collaboration sometimes requires compromise; striking a balance of ideas is often in the best interest of your child.



Parent Toolkit

Your Rights as a Parent

PARENT'S RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

<p>RIGHT TO REVIEW YOUR CHILD'S CUMULATIVE RECORD</p> <p>*The cumulative scholastic record</p> <p>*Ask for appointment with the teacher or principal if you do not agree with it</p>	<p>RIGHT TO REVIEW SCHOOL PUBLIC DOCUMENTS</p> <p>*In the district</p> <p>*In the school</p>	<p>RIGHT TO TESTING WITH NO DISCRIMINATION</p> <p>*Adequate preparation *Know how the test will be used</p> <p>*Be given plenty of information and examples</p>
<p>RIGHT TO VOTE</p> <p>*In your local school *At the district level</p> <p>*Express your opinion as a parent</p>	<p>RIGHTS FOR BILINGUAL STUDENTS</p> <p>*Federal rights under Title VI and Equal Educational Opportunities Act</p> <p>* State rights</p>	<p>RIGHTS OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS</p> <p>*Enroll and attend school</p> <p>*Funds</p>
<p>RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT</p> <p>*Verbal harassment *Unequal educational opportunities</p> <p>*Unequal treatment</p>	<p>RIGHT TO VISIT YOUR CHILD'S CLASSROOM</p> <p>*To observe classroom</p>	<p>RIGHT TO EQUAL ACCESS TO PUBLIC FUNDS</p> <p>*For example a case filed against LAUSD school district to improve the physical conditions of school facilities.</p>
<p>RIGHT TO BE NOTIFIED IN WRITING OF DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS</p> <p>*Local regulation *State regulation</p>	<p>RIGHT TO AN INTERPRETER</p> <p>*In parents' gatherings *In council meetings *In parents' conferences</p>	<p>RIGHT TO APPEAL DECISIONS MADE BY SCHOOL</p> <p>*Ask for an appointment with the principal</p> <p>*Ask for a mediator</p> <p>*Take complaint to higher authorities</p>



Parent Toolkit

School Decision Making and Advocacy

Guidelines for Being An Effective Advocate

- **Build good relations from the start.** Don't wait for an issue to emerge to introduce yourself to your child's teacher. Raising a concern will be easier and less confrontational if open communication has already been established. There are many ways to become a positive force in your child's classroom. Consider dropping a friendly note or making an appointment with the teacher early in the year just to [touch base](#). [Volunteering](#) in the classroom or [chaperoning a class trip](#) will also help you get to know the teacher better, as well as allow you to observe your child firsthand.
- **If a problem occurs, gather the details.** Perhaps your child is struggling with a subject that used to come easily, or maybe he has voiced concerns about being [teased](#). It makes sense to act when you observe an issue or your child tells you something's wrong. Trust your own judgment and move forward, but also make sure you have all the information available.
- **Begin with the teacher, usually.** In most cases, an informal chat with the classroom teacher should be the first step in addressing any issue. Starting with the teacher gives you the opportunity to escalate your complaint should a suitable solution not be reached. The guidance counselor and school psychologist are also helpful in-school resources. The principal is the next step. You can contact the superintendent if the principal is not able to help reach a satisfactory conclusion.
- **Connect with others.** There's strength in numbers and most likely any school-based issue is not unique to your child. Look into your local [PTA](#) to connect with other parents. If you're concerned about a disability of any kind, contact your state's federally funded parent resource centers.

- **Keep a record.** Document all your communications, both to be on the same page about expectations and so you'll know who told you what and when. If you move beyond the casual chat level, express concerns in writing. Keep a copy, and send the letter by certified mail.
- **Avoid the blame game.** Mixing an important issue that concerns your child with busy teachers and school administrators can make for potentially frustrating feelings. For best results, try to keep your cool. Do try to be considerate of the teacher's time. If educational jargon has left your head spinning, use Scholastic's (scholastic.com) teacher translator, but also feel free to ask for clarification. Even though you may have to be persistent, keep in mind that ultimately everyone involved wants what's best for your child.
- **Know your rights.** Most issues have a good chance of being addressed to everyone's satisfaction within your school community. But if you are unable to get to the resolution you need, legal means are available if the issue is concerning your child's disability. If your child's disability affects his educational performance, you have the right under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) to have your child tested to determine his special education eligibility. You can also request mediation or a "fair hearing." Mediation brings you and the school district together with a neutral third party who is trained to help everyone come to an agreement. At a fair hearing, you and the school district present the dispute and a judge issues a decision.

Source: scholastic.com



Parent Toolkit

School Decision Making and Advocacy

HOW TO BE A GOOD ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD: TIPS FOR PARENTS

Get Involved, Be Informed:

- Know the facts of your child's situation, including her strengths and weaknesses and the views of those who work first-hand with your child in school. If your child has a disability, know how it affects your child in school.
- Know your rights and legal procedures. Make sure that you have all the details.
- Know your school. Get to know teachers, therapists, and other personnel. Build positive relationships and contribute to the school environment. Know who the decision-makers are and what motivates them. Stay informed about what's happening in your school and school district.

Keep Records:

- Make your requests in writing, (they do not have to be typed), even if you have also spoken directly to school personnel.
- Keep copies of everything you get or send to the school.
- If possible, send important letters to the school "Return Receipt Requested." If you hand-deliver materials, make note of the date and time, and the person who received it.
- Don't rely on phone calls or casual conversations. Keep a record of the conversation: date, time, name and position of the school personnel and any decisions reached.
- Whenever possible, ask for written confirmation of what is promised to you.
- Organize your records. A notebook or binder is helpful.

Prepare:

- Decide what you think the district could do to solve the problems you've identified; if you can figure out what should be done there's a much better chance of a successful outcome.
- What kind of meeting is being scheduled? Is it an IEP meeting? A mediation session? If you're not sure, call the district to find out. Ask what will be discussed. Identify any legal requirements that relate to the meeting, such as what kind of notice you must receive, what staff must participate, and any time deadlines that apply.
- Find out about the real story; do not rely on gossip or hearsay.
- Decide what you want to accomplish. Prioritize. Be selective. It may help to bring a checklist and to agree with the district concerning the agenda or topics to be discussed before you go.
- Bring materials that will help you get your point across: evaluations, report cards, evidence of your child's performance, records, copies of the law or guidebooks, private evaluations.
- Bring someone to help you at the meeting. If you can't locate an advocate, bring a friend or neighbor or a member of your church or synagogue.
- If necessary, bring others who have worked with your child who may help the school see the problem differently – a psychologist or therapist, or a community leader who works with your child.
- List questions that you want answered to keep your focus during the meeting.
- Make appointments for meetings, and call to confirm them the day before.

Use Meeting Time Effectively:

- Be polite and courteous at all meetings. Be on time and respect reasonable time limits.
- Acknowledge when good things have happened and special efforts have been made.
- Sit across from decision-makers. Keep eye contact. Take notes, or have a friend take notes while you listen.
- Say what you want in your own words. Be clear, concise.
- Ask questions! And make sure you get answers.
- Take the time to make good decisions:

- Repeat what they say to make sure you understand.
Don't feel pressured to discuss something if the school did not prepare.
- you, or to make a decision immediately if you need a day to think about it. Take breaks when needed to cool off, consult, or cry.
- End meetings with a plan of action or "next steps." Set deadlines.
- Get a summary of what was agreed to and who was present.

Use Resources Creatively:

- Go up the "chain of command." If you are unsuccessful in resolving matters with the principal, go to the superintendent's office, your special education director, or other personnel at the district level. If that is unsuccessful, go to the school board.
- Find other parents with your concerns, and approach the problem as a group – use your PTA, support groups, or talk to other parents in your child's class.
- Look for other programs or resources that may help: violence prevention programs, instructional support centers, mediation.
- Talk with other parents and advocates about what works and what does not work. Learn from each other's experiences.

Follow Up:

- Keep track of deadlines. Communicate with personnel.
- Report on progress as well as problems.
- Be firm about timelines, but patient enough for the school district to accomplish what it needs within those timelines.

Remember:

- **YOU** are an expert on your child.
- Focus on the problem, not the people. Avoid getting sidetracked by personal conflicts. Bring the focus back to your child.
- Don't get bogged down in "legalese." You will be the most convincing in your own words. Make sure the school district staff speak clearly and don't get bogged down in jargon you don't understand – ask questions!
- Focus on the present and future, not the past. Work first on fixing the present problem; address remedies for the past second.

- **There may be more than one way to get what your child needs.** Work toward mutually agreeable solutions. Be flexible and creative. Problem solve! Problem solve! Problem solve!
- The “big picture” – remember what is truly important to you – and your child – and advocate for it!

Source: Education Law (www.elc-pa.org)

Ten Tips for Child Advocates

1. **Choose your issue.** Personal experiences, community issues, and data on system wide disparities are all sources of potential advocacy issues. Decide what it is you'd like to change.
2. **Identify solutions.** Prepare a list of possible ways to successfully resolve your issue.
3. **Identify supporters.** Chances are good that you're not the only person or group advocating for an issue. Talk to parents and parent groups. Use the Internet to find other people or organizations that are working on related issues and seek their assistance. Equally important is choosing a legislator or other government official who will sponsor and be a champion for your issue.
4. **Develop a strategy.** Will you advocate for change on the local, state, or federal level? Which of the three branches of government – executive, legislative, or judicial – is best positioned to help you achieve your desired outcome? Who will oppose your efforts and what can you do to neutralize the opposition?
5. **Frame your message.** Work with someone who has experience in public or media relations to help develop and disseminate a clear, concise, and consistent message to help advance your issue.
6. **Educate.** Attend community, state, and national organization meetings. Offer to be a speaker at a civic group or philanthropic organization, or professional society event. Meet with lawmakers and other government officials. Write letters to your newspaper.
7. **Mobilize supporters.** Democracy is not a spectator sport! Establish and activate e-mail alert systems and telephone trees to ensure that supporters make their lawmakers aware of the need and support for your initiative.
8. **Testify.** Offer to tell your story at a public hearing. The personal experiences of constituents are very powerful in convincing government officials to make changes.
9. **Don't give up.** Often times, it takes more than one attempt to enact a new law or implement changes in public policy. Take Thomas Jefferson's advice, "Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom."
10. **VOTE!** Pay attention to what candidates are proposing for children...and make your decisions accordingly. Remember, these are the people who will be making decisions about your issue. Take a child with you when you vote to teach them about this important civic duty!

Source: <http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/state-advocacy/Pages/Ten-Tips-for-Child-Advocates.aspx>

Contact the Division of State Government Affairs at stgov@aap.org or 847/434-77

- See more at: <http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/state-advocacy/Pages/Ten-Tips-for-Child-Advocates.aspx#sthash.2mXsUn6.dpuf>



Parent Toolkit

Telling Your Story Advocacy

Telling Your Personal Story

Most of us think of story telling as a casual act. Because this is the case, we often tell stories in a spontaneous way that may not be organized. This works well in many instances, but not for the purpose of advocacy. To encourage systems change, personal stories need to be told in a much more structured way. The story we tell key decision makers must clearly communicate a purpose, and at the same time, include memorable details that keep the listener's interest long after the story is told.

Legislators and other public officials often hear thousands of stories every day. That's why it's important to move your personal story to the front of their mind by making it efficient and effective.

Components of an Efficient Story

An efficient story is one that is well organized. The speaker quickly makes key points and uses memorable, but short examples to reinforce each point. Think of your story as a segment on the 10 o'clock television news. On a news program, important stories are given no more than three minutes. In this brief amount of time, a news reporter must communicate the key facts, use examples to support those facts, and keep the viewer sufficiently interested in the story. In summary, an efficient story should:

- Have a clear purpose
- Be well organized
- Be told in a way that respects the time of the listener (no longer than three to five minutes)
- Be told only in the amount of time necessary to make the point
- Suggest a solution to the problem

Components of an Effective Story

An effective story has elements that are not easily forgotten. It communicates key points and uses examples that make an emotional connection with the listener and are easy to understand. An effective story should:

- Have understandable key points
- Have good examples to reinforce the points
- Engage the listener so s/he feels personally involved in the story
- Suggest a remedy to the problems related in the story

From the Storyteller's Perspective

Your story is important because your personal experience is valuable for shaping effective legislation or other changes in systems. When talking to your legislator or other public official, it is important to point out why you think your personal story is important, and then provide ways that the official can help you and others. Always offer to assist the decision makers in collecting more information or participate in ongoing meetings to create effective legislation or plans. If they ask questions you are unable to answer, always tell them that you will find an answer and call them as soon as possible. Don't try to "make up" an answer. Lastly, be sure to thank them for taking the time to hear your story.

From the Legislator's or Public Official's Perspective

The legislator, legislative aide, or other decision maker may have some knowledge about your issue, but will probably need additional information. This person may also wish to help, but might not know how to help. Some officials may wonder why your issue is important to them and question what the result will be from their efforts.

We Can Work Together

In the end, it is important to let the public official or legislator know that you are willing to work with him or her to help solve the problem. If you are both committed to working together, you can persuade others of the issue's value. It's also good to remember that resources for solutions may be limited, but it is still well worth the time to make sure the legislation or proposed plan for change is the most effective it can be. Lastly, a complete solution to the problem may not be achieved all at once; a continuing commitment to work together may be needed to properly address the issue.

- Source: PACER Center



Parent Toolkit

Collaborating with Community

COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Coordinate resources and services from the community for families, students and schools

Check how often your child’s school engages in the following practices. The results of your assessment will determine how community friendly your school is.

Your Child’s School:	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
Provides a community resource directory for parents and students with information on community agencies, programs and services.			
Provides information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students.			
Works with local businesses, industries and community organizations on programs to enhance student skills.			
Offers after-school programs for students, with support from community businesses, agencies or volunteers.			
Sponsors inter-generational programs with local senior citizen groups.			
Provides “one-stop” shopping for family services through partnerships with school counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.			
Organizes service learning projects for the community, students, families, and schools.			
Building is open for use by the community after school hours.			

National Family Advocacy and Support Training Project (FAST)

Tips for Writing Letters, Faxes, and E-mails

- Include the date and your contact information at top.
- On an e-mail, write a few words in the subject line to summarize your issue.
- Personalize your message with photo of your child if you can.
- Include only one issue.
- Keep the message to less than one page.
- Let them know in the first paragraph of no more than six to eight sentences:
 - who you are
 - why you are writing
 - what you want them to do
- Write a brief personal story (no more than 250 words) in the second paragraph.

NOTE: While letters are still the preferred method of written communication, security at the federal level has made sending a letter through the Capitol postal service a three- to four-week process. If a letter needs to arrive in a short period of time, we highly recommend faxing your letter.

Addressing Members of U. S. Congress:

To Your Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

To Your Representative:

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

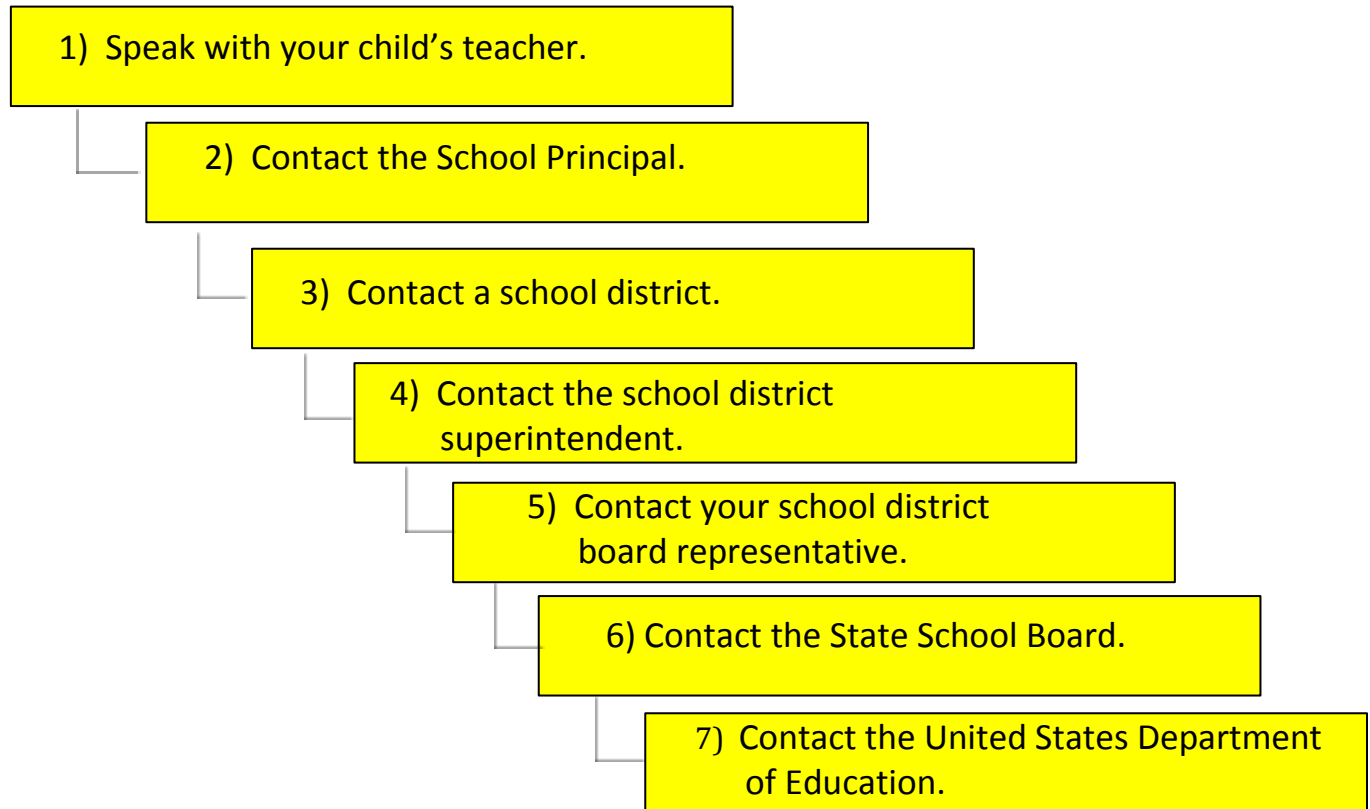
Include the above addresses in e-mail messages as well as those sent through the Postal Service.



Parent Toolkit

Your Rights as a Parent

Documenting Solution Steps





Parent Toolkit

Your Rights as a Parent

Example of a Complaint

Letter components:

Ask if the organization has a standard form to file a complaint, if they do not have one, follow the next steps:

- Write the name of the appropriate person to address and send
- Date
- Include all of your contact information (name, address and telephone number)
 - Name of school, organization, etc.
- Description of incident:
 - When and what happened.
 - Steps already taken or in progress.
 - Include names of staff who is aware of incident or who you have spoken to about incident.
- What would you like to see done about the incident and by when.
- Include a date of when you expect a reply to your complaint letter.
- Sign and date your complaint letter.
- Send a copy of your complaint letter to the person above the one you are addressing it to, such as their superior or supervisor.
- Keep a copy for yourself and when you deliver your complaint letter, have it signed as proof of receipt and file with important documents.

10 Key Steps to Advocacy

Step 1: Bring people together

- People with common concerns are the most effective when brought together to work towards one objective
- However, diversity of experience and perspective helps to make your coalition dynamic
- Reach out to an inclusive group of people: medical, nursing, clinical officer, paramedical students, faculty, administration, civil society

Step 2: Identify the problem

- The "problem" is a broad area of concern, such as:
 - A health workforce shortage in your country
 - Unavailable essential medicines at your facility
 - Limited resources at your university
- Problems can also be considered challenges
- You've already identified the major challenges facing the health sector in your countries

Step 3: Develop your strategic objective

- An "objective" is a solution, or partial solution, to the problem you've identified
- It should be clearly linked to the programmatic or policy change necessary to address the problem (in your opinion!)
- In this way, whatever method you choose to achieve your objective, you will be working to address the systemic causes of the problem

Step 4: Get the facts

- With the right (and accurate!) facts, you can make a strong case for the achievement of your objective
- Analyze all the aspects of the situation
 - What are the facts that will make your argument strongest?
 - How does the problem impact you as health professionals?
 - How does the problem impact the community?
- Identify facts that will make the biggest impact on your allies and opponents
- Identify which facts are missing, and where you may need to undertake some research
- Use your coalition partners and allies to gather the most comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate facts as possible

Step 5: Identify your target

- The “target” of your advocacy is the person who has the power to make the change happen
- Questions to address:
 - Who are the decision-makers who affect you on campus?
 - Who are the decision-makers who affect you in your future professions?

Step 6: Identify the decision to be influenced

- Key is to identify the actual decision you need to influence
 - Understand the context and constraints on your target

(the decision-maker)

- Understand the timing of the decision
- Focus on a particular decision at a particular time

Step 7: Identify your allies & build a coalition

- You are likely to achieve the best results when working together
 - Joint objectives create a wide base of support
 - Different perspectives enhance diversity and demonstrate wide support
- Remember: an alliance can and should respect differences (you don't need to be the same to work together effectively)
- What could an advocacy alliance look like?
 - Among students:
 - Medical students, nursing students, pharmacy students, dental students, students studying to be clinical officers, peers at other universities, etc.
 - Throughout the university:
 - Students, administrators, professors, counselors
 - Throughout the community:
 - Professional associations, PLWHA groups, women's groups, patients groups
 - Throughout the country/region?

Step 8: Determine your method

- The full spectrum of activities that you implement is your "method" of advocacy
- It is often the most visible part of a campaign

- But that DOES NOT mean it is the most important
- Analyze which activities will have the greatest effect on your target, and which will help you achieve your objective
- **Possible actions**
 - These actions have the potential to:
 - Influence your target
 - Affect their decision
 - Bring you closer to your objective
 - Contribute to solving the major problem
 - Remember: This is the 8th step within a much larger process!
 - Research
 - Policy briefs
 - Meetings/Forums
 - Media Outreach
 - Public Education
 - Debates
 - Monitoring and Reporting
 - Sign on Letters
 - Budget analysis
- **Step 9: Review, evaluate and adjust**
 - As advocacy efforts proceed, review the challenges, the objectives (your solution), your target and your method of reaching them
 - Meet and discuss regularly so that your group stays together and addresses new concerns
- **Step 10: Celebrate successes**

- Advocacy is a process, not one single activity or one single result
- Advocacy is positive , and brings people together for a common cause
- Advocacy should be inspirational—you have the passion and the drive to engage others and make people listen.
- Advocacy is individual passion transformed into group action.
- **Moving forward**
 - Remember that advocacy is a process, not just an activity
 - Develop and deepen our skills in several key steps:
 - Creating a strong objective
 - Building your coalition (leadership development)
 - Identifying targets (power mapping)
 - Choosing your method (working with the media)
 - Online Organizing

Checklist For Media Events

- Have the date, time, and place been cleared with all the speakers?
- Are there other media conflicts (e.g., another major event or press conference)?
- Is the room large enough?
- Will you need a public address system?
- Have volunteers been recruited to set up and clean up the room before and after the event?
- Do you plan to serve refreshments? If so, have people been asked to bring them?
- Who is sending the media advisory?
- Who is making follow-up phone calls?
- Is there a script available for those making follow-up phone calls to the media?
- Are visuals, charts, or graphs needed at the press conference?
- Who is writing each person's presentation? Are there good quotable sound bites?
- Do you need translators?
- Is a time set for speakers to rehearse their presentations and answers to the anticipated questions?
- Are materials being prepared for the press kit?
 - Press release
 - Background information on speakers
 - Fact sheet
 - Organizational background
 - Copies of speakers' statements
- Is someone drafting a question and answer sheet for anticipated questions at the press conference?
- Will your organization's name be projected well through signs, posters, buttons, and so forth?
- Is someone assigned to hang the banner? This can take a while.
- Is there a podium sign?
- Who will greet the media and staff the sign-in table?
- Is someone in your group going to take photos & videos?
- Who is assigned to assist the speakers with details at the press conference?
- Who will send releases to those who don't attend the press conference?
- Who will call reporters who don't attend, but will need the information immediately in order to use it?
- Are volunteers assigned to watch for stories in various media?
- Will thank you notes be sent to all spokespersons and volunteers?

- Source: National PTA



Parent Toolkit

Social Media Advocacy

More Social Media Best Practices

Facebook Best Practices

Variety. Be sure to publish different types of posts. A good social media engagement plan integrates multiple types of posts, not just status updates and not only pictures. Here is a list of post types to work into your social media plan: general status updates, “click like” posts, photos, events, links to websites, links to articles, quotes, questions, calls-to-action, videos, testimonials, announcements, breaking news, and how-to posts.

Tone. Be sure to consider your tone and know that your audience may be perceive your tone differently, as in any electronic communication. Try to use a personal tone, tap into emotion, and stir debate among your audience.

Timing. Shoot to post during peak hours. Facebook and other social media outlets are most active in the early morning (around 9:00 am), at the end of work (around 5:00 pm), and late at night (around 11:00 pm). If your usage peaks during these time periods, you will increase the odds that your target audience will see your content.

Twitter Best Practices

Respond quickly. This is particularly important when dealing with customer service comments and concerns. You should stay current with Twitter mentions and respond to concerns within two hours.

Space out tweets. Tweets should be spaced throughout the day so that they ideally reach your followers’ feeds at periodic times. If you only tweet at one time of day, you lose a lot of visibility. Third-party applications, such as Hootsuite, allow you to schedule your tweets and allow multiple users to access the same account to help spread out the workload.

Too much self-promotion can be a bad thing. When an organization does nothing but promote its message, people won’t listen and they won’t follow. Thirty

percent of tweets should be related to your organization, while the other 70 percent of tweets should be about related topics that provide value to your followers. Include a link to a website, blog post, article, etc. Not only is this a great way to leverage your other platforms, it also gives you credibility as being a source of great content.

Choose who you follow. Certain Twitter directories, such as WeFollow or Tweepz, allow you to locate users to follow based on their interests and geography. Follow people who either mention you, or are interested in the services or products you offer. Follow people who are retweeting you or mentioning your name. However, if you follow too many people too quickly, you can lose credibility.

Build a relationship with users. Make sure to thank people for mentioning you, following you, or just comment on something they said that was interesting. If they post interesting content, feel free to retweet it. Generally, people will follow you if you genuinely reach out to them.

Join the conversation. If people are talking about things that matter to you, feel free to join the conversation! This gives your brand a human voice and shows that you care.

Facebook Fan Page Best Practices

Respond quickly. Just like Twitter, you should respond to comments/ inquiries within two hours.

Join the conversation. It's okay to respond to conversations within a response thread from a post. You can respond directly to several individuals within one comment too. Just make sure to identify who you are responding for each statement you make.

Develop relationships. Get to know the people who are frequently commenting on the page. Engage in conversation with them by asking questions and responding to posts. Developing these relationships is crucial when developing a strong base of "super fans." These relationships can be effectively leveraged in future campaigns.

We're all in this together. Try to avoid "I" statements. Brands are all about "we", "us" and "our" and your voice and communication strategy should reflect this mentality.