Five Ways to Help Teachers Hear You

By **Carmen G. Farrell, MBA**

Parents can advocate for their child while maintaining a positive relationship with their school.

Strong emotions, often negative rather than positive, are usually how parents first engage with the school system.

Parents may sense a disconnect between what their child experiences and what they believe they need. These strong feelings stem from their deep care.

Every family wants the best for their child, and when they feel something is wrong, they act based on those intense emotions.

Here are five ways to strengthen your relationship with the school while advocating for your child.



Approach the school positively

The first step as an advocate is often the hardest. It requires courage to approach the school system positively and advocate for what you believe is needed, not to "lose it."

Try to remember that wherever the "disconnect" is for you or your child, no staff member is deliberately ignoring it or trying to make the situation worse. They are doing their best.

School staff need your support, and it's your job to make it as easy as you can for them to understand your point of view.

To be productive and to establish a relationship with the school that endures, you need four other key factors.

See the good intentions of others

Advocacy within the school system requires approaching the task with understanding while balancing emotions (disconnection, sadness, or anger).

Recognize that the people working in the school system are there to support children. Teachers, educational assistants, administrators, and specialists have all chosen careers dedicated to serving society. Their workdays are focused on children's development.

To do their jobs effectively, they need you as a parent to help them understand your child, share your feelings, and communicate your needs.

Use respect to get respect

Respect and understand the communication processes a school and its district have in place for interacting with parents. The classroom teacher is usually the first point of contact. Start a conversation with the teacher and ask who else might be involved in the discussion.

Districts have educational assistants, teachers, principals, and district-level staff who support students in different ways.

Increase your chances of having your voice heard by using "I" statements. This approach keeps communication open (and also works well with children and teens). Here are a few examples:

- "I understand there are always two sides to a story. I want to hear your side because what we're hearing at home is…"
- "I've noticed this about my child…"
- "To me, it looks like my child is…"



- "I'm hoping to have a conversation about this and wonder who else should be a part of it."

You are the expert on your child

A parent's job is to provide information about their child to help the school do its job better. The school relies on you!

Be open and honest about your child's abilities, differences, challenges, and needs by doing the following:

Encourage questions and curiosity

Provide accurate information to fill gaps in understanding about your child, preventing stories and assumptions that could limit their potential.

Share information

Let the school know about activities that your child enjoys and that you've observed work well. Don't assume what a school can or cannot do. If you don't ask, you'll never know what might be possible.

Proactively communicate with other families

It's just as important to reach out to other families in your child's class about your child's needs and progress. The teacher can support this by sending home a letter you write. You need to inform parents about what's happening with your child and encourage their curiosity. They won't ask questions on their own.

Other parents can become allies in helping your child make friends outside of school if you provide examples of how their children can support your child.



Stay informed, available, and encouraging

Let the school staff do their thing, but don't disappear. An ongoing connection makes it easy to show interest and concern. Do this by regularly asking how things are going and whether the home can help.

Additionally, take the opportunity to tell school staff how much you value their efforts and how much they have made a difference in your child's life. It's also about the power of a simple, heartfelt "thank you." Let them know you notice their efforts.

The key to strengthening the home-school partnership is maintaining open, respectful relationships.

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Postpartum Recovery and Sensory Sensitivities

By Alix Myers

Here is neuroaffirming information to help you understand sensory overload during the "fourth trimester."

The postpartum period, often called the "fourth trimester," is a time of significant emotional, physical, and sensory change.

For neurodivergent birthing moms, partners, or other family members, especially those with sensory processing issues, this phase can bring unique challenges.

Approaching postpartum recovery through a neuroaffirming lens can help you navigate this transition with compassion and support.



Understanding postpartum recovery

Postpartum recovery is different for every person.

Physically, birthing mothers often face hormonal changes, healing from delivery, disrupted sleep, and the demands of infant care.

Emotionally, there may be joy, overwhelm, grief, or all of the above.

For those with sensory sensitivities, this recovery period can be more intense.

According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, postpartum physical recovery can last up to six weeks, although those who have experienced it know it can take years.