



Collaborating With Parents, Caregivers and Families



To support meaningful collaboration with your students and their parents, caregivers and families, it's good to talk about the student's strengths and stretches, learning styles, and social interactions and connections. You can also discuss strategies for classroom support, and explore (with the student included, when possible) other potential accommodations or modifications to better support the student's learning and overall school experience. Building trust and relationship with students and their families is key to providing neuro-affirming support.

For more information, see [BC CAISE – An Ecosystem of Support: A Guide to Meaningful Consultation](#).

Topics to discuss

When meeting with parents, start by providing space and time for them to ask any specific questions they have and to bring up any other topics they may wish to discuss. Also, ask parents questions about their child: they are the experts on their child and can provide insights about their child's strengths, challenges, motivators, triggers, learning style and support needs.

Things to consider

Parents' previous experiences with schools

- Parent-blaming or dismissing parent feedback—Parents may have had negative encounters with previous teachers and other school personnel, including feeling blamed for their child's actions or learning needs, or having their perspectives, ideas or requests dismissed.
- Neurodivergent parents—Neurodivergent parents may have their own previous negative experiences with schools and learning because of ableism or systemic barriers, or they may require accommodations to meaningfully participate in school meetings and consultations. Ask parents what their preferred communication style is (e.g., emails, phone calls, in-person meetings), so they can fully participate in collaborative efforts.
- BIPOC¹ parents—Many racialized parents have had negative encounters with schools because of systemic racism.
- Other socio-economic factors— (e.g., poverty, lack of healthcare benefits) may determine if and when parents are able to receive supports or access assessments for their child.

Using a trauma-informed approach

It is important to take a trauma-informed approach when communicating with parents to cultivate a collaborative relationship that best supports the student and creates bridges between school and home. To be **trauma-informed** is to recognize the pervasiveness of trauma and systemic violence, while being aware of trauma's consequences, anticipating how people may respond to our words and actions, and avoid causing further harm.

¹ Black, Indigenous, People of Colour



Strategies for collaborating with parents

Understanding the student

Topics to discuss include:

- ⚙️ Specific conditions—Discuss any specific conditions the student may have, such as ADHD, autism, intellectual disability, or dyslexia and how it may relate to the student's learning and social interactions. Ask whether parents suspect conditions or are in the process of having specific conditions assessed. Assessments can take a year or more to pursue, and parents may be hesitant to share in-depth personal assessments that may divulge highly confidential family history.
- ⚙️ Strengths and stretches—Identify the student's unique strengths, areas of interest and areas where they may face difficulties or require additional supports.
- ⚙️ Social interactions and connections—Explore how the student best interacts and connects with peers, how their peers interact and connect with them, and what supports or conditions they may need to experience positive social situations at school.
- ⚙️ Transitions and routines—Discuss how the student experiences transitions and changes in routine. What works at home? What has worked well in past school transitions, or what was not effective?

Classroom support and strategies

Topics to discuss include:

- ⚙️ Supports and accommodations—Discuss potential supports or accommodations that can be made in the classroom to support the student's learning, such as preferential seating, reduced workload, or individualized assignments. Ask what has worked for the student in the past, or what supports work well at home to support the student in their learning.
- ⚙️ Communication strategies—Discuss effective communication strategies for interacting with the student, both in and out of the classroom. Learn what is working best at home, including particular patterns of communication the student may use effectively with parents, families or friends.
- ⚙️ Collaboration—Discuss how parents and teachers can work together, and with the student, to support the student's learning and development. Provide parents with a variety of options for communicating with the school, honouring different forms of communication, time to process and time to ask questions.
- ⚙️ Individualized Education Plan (IEP)—If applicable, discuss the student's IEP and how it is being implemented.
- ⚙️ Motivation and habits—Discuss the student's motivation and work habits, and how they can be better understood, strengthened and further developed.
- ⚙️ Regulation—Discuss any classroom regulation concerns, triggers and strategies for addressing them.
- ⚙️ Peer relationships—Discuss the student's relationships with their peers and ways to foster positive interactions and connections, keeping in mind the student's social preferences.