



Educational Champion Training

MODULE 3:

Communication with Child and School

Why Focus on Communication?



- Communicating with a child about their school experiences is an important component of **supporting their education**.
- Children whose parents regularly talk with them about school **do better academically** than children whose parents rarely discuss school with them.
- Building a positive, communicative relationship with the child's teacher(s) and school staff can also help support a child's school experience.

Talk to the child regularly about what is happening at school.



Talk to the child about how things are going at school and what he/she is learning.

Here are some sample questions you can use to start the conversation:

- “What was your favorite thing about school today (or this week)?”
- “Can you tell me about three things you learned at school today (or this week)?”
- “Who did you spend time with during recess/lunch today?”

Talk to the child about his/her schoolwork.



Here are some sample questions or comments to **start the conversation:**

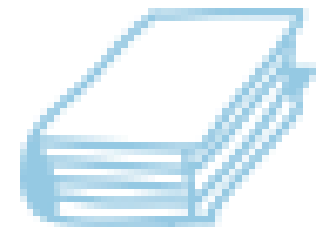
- “What subjects do you have homework in tonight?”
- “Do you have any tests or quizzes coming up?”
- “Did you have any tests today (or this week)?”

Talk to the child about his/her interests and goals at school.



Here are some ways to start the conversation:

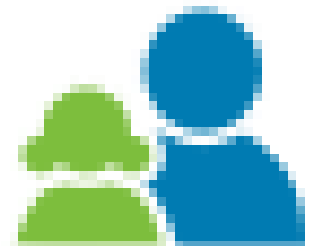
- “What subjects do you like the best?”
- “What subjects do you think are the hardest? Why are they hardest?”
- “What subjects do you think are the easiest? Why are they easiest?”



Strategies you can try if you are having trouble getting the child interested in talking.



- Ask the child to **tell you a story** about something that happened in school.
- Offer to tell the child something about your own day first; then ask the child to tell you something about his/her day.
- Try talking to the child about school while doing a project or activity together.



Always listen to what the child has to say about school.



This will help you **stay aware** of how things are going at school.

It will **show the child** that you care about his/her education and value what he/she says about school.



Say things to encourage the child, and to encourage problem solving.



Some examples:

- “You are doing a great job with your homework!”
- “I am very proud of how hard you worked on your project!”
- “I know you are having a hard time in school right now, but I am here to support you. Let’s talk about what we can do to make things better.”

Communicate with your actions as well as with your words.



Here are some ideas of ways to show the child that you value his/her work and think school is important:

- Keep a **folder** of the child's best schoolwork.
- If your schedule allows it, consider **volunteering** in the child's classroom or school.
- Attend **school events** in which the child is involved

How to communicate with the child's school.



Keep a list of important contact people at the child's school. The list should include:

- The child's teacher (or teachers)
- The school principal
- The school counselor
- The County Office of Education foster youth liaison
- The Adult & Child foster youth education advocate
- The district's special education director

How to introduce yourself to school staff.



- As an ed champion, you should introduce yourself to the child's teacher and school staff.
- An sample script for ed champions who hold ed rights would be: “I have been appointed by the Juvenile Court as ____ ed rep. That means that I make educational decisions for _____in the same way that his/ her parent would. This includes being in regular contact with the teacher and participating in school meetings. I also report on _____ progress to the court. Here is my contact info and copy of my court order.”

Talk to the child's teacher regularly about how the child is doing in school, even if the child is doing well.



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- The child's teacher will be glad that you are interested and want to participate in the child's education!
 - Here are some sample questions you can ask the child's teacher:
 - “Is _____ keeping up with homework assignments?”
 - “How is _____'s overall progress?”
 - “Are there any subjects that _____ is having a hard time in?”

Effective Strategies for communication with the child's teacher.



- Make eye contact;
- Listen carefully;
- Being open to the teacher's ideas;
- Being proactive in sharing his/her opinions and ideas.

Keep communication open!



- Make sure to respond to all communications from the child's teacher or school staff.
- Attend all school meetings. This includes:
 - Back to school night or school open house night
 - Teacher conferences
 - Special education meetings
 - Any other meetings that the child's teacher or school staff invite you to
- If a meeting is scheduled at a time you can't attend, be sure to let the school know and ask to reschedule for a time that works for you.

Be proactive.



If you have questions or concerns about how things are going at school, don't be afraid to ask. Call the teacher to schedule a time to meet in person. Try to write down your questions or comments ahead of time so they will be easier to remember at the meeting.

My Goals:



What I will do:

How often I will do this:

Resources.



This PowerPoint, Tip Sheets, Mentoring Modules, and supporting materials can be found at:

www.foster-ed.org.

If you have questions about the materials, please contact: info@fostered.org.

Other Resources:

- *Communicating with Your Child's Teacher*, written by the University of Florida IFAS Extension
- *Back-to-School Conference Questions*, written by School Family and available at SchoolFamily.com
- *Parent-Teacher Conferences: A Tip Sheet for Parents*, written by Harvard Family Research Project and available at www.hfrp.org
- *Effects of Parental Involvement on Eighth-Grade Achievement*, by E.H. Sui-Chu and J.D. Willms