**10 Tips for Communicating with Your Child’s Teachers**

**1. Assume positive intent**. Always assume that your teacher wants to help, even if you aren’t **yet** on the same page as to how to work together to help your child.

**2. Acknowledge the teacher’s challenge.** It’s tough to have large [classes](http://impactadhd.com/managing-kids/at-school/tips-to-improve-communication-with-your-childs-teacher/?utm_source=Jan+New+Newsletter&utm_campaign=Jan+2013+Newsletter&utm_medium=email) with lots of kids who each learn differently. Be honest. You’re frustrated by your child’s ADHD, sometimes. Imagine that the teacher might feel that way, too! Commiserate with how challenging it can be to educate these kids who are really smart but have trouble learning.

**3. Try not to blame or express anger**. When we get frustrated, we tend to look for other people’s mistakes. Blaming looks backward, and won’t move the communication forward. Try to stay present, and stay calm. If you’re feeling angry or frustrated, take a break before you respond.

**4. Show gratitude.** Let the teacher know that you sincerely appreciate his/her efforts on yours child’s behalf. You don’t need to wait until the holidays or the end of the school year. Tell the teacher, or write a note, to let him/her know how grateful you are that s/he is trying to help your child.

**5. Explain your child.** Help the teacher understand what your child is experiencing, and how it is showing up at home. Your child may be “holding it together” at school, so the teacher has no idea how upset he is, or how **hard** he is trying! Make sure the teacher knows the full picture!

**6. Offer some solutions.** Explain [what you know](http://impactadhd.com/managing-kids/at-school/tips-to-improve-communication-with-your-childs-teacher/?utm_source=Jan+New+Newsletter&utm_campaign=Jan+2013+Newsletter&utm_medium=email) about what works for motivating your child. I realized that my son needs acknowledgement for what he is doing well, some good old-fashioned compassion for how hard it can be for him to stay organized, and a little playfulness. The teacher’s response to those suggestions was quite positive. She said she’d try, and I can’t ask for more than that!

**7. Communicate what’s important to you.** When we are all aligned on the goal, whether it’s preparing this child for the next transition, or teaching him to be a life-long learner, then we work together better as a team. I let the teacher know that his grades are not as important to me as his learning to master the **process and structure** of getting his school-work done. Our focus on the system of learning for him is my priority.

**8. Call on the team and other’s expertise**. You know your kid, but it’s not your job to know **how** to educate him/her. Let the learning specialists and teachers guide you, and ask for ideas and support. Be willing to try things, and make changes until you find something that works. If you think that there are things about ADHD that your teacher still needs some helping learning how to work with, respectfully ask the school’s learning specialist to provide some in-service training.
**9. Don’t take it personally.** Sometimes, teachers don’t realize that their frustration with an ADHD child’s challenges in getting work turned in can sound like a veiled criticism of the parents. “Why can’t he just get it done?” translates to “Why can’t you just help him get it done?” And then we feel guilty because we feel at fault. ADHD is not an excuse, but it IS an important part of the explanation. Focus on what you **can do** to help your child, and try not to get lost in the “I must be a bad parent” trap that we set for ourselves!

**10. Assure the teacher you’re going to help, but that this is a work in progress**. Teachers want to know you’re involved, but it’s important that they know you are not a “quick fix” for your child’s struggles. I tell the teacher that I will provide support, structure, and ongoing communication, and we’ll do our best. If its late, I’m going to make my son go to bed and not stay up late to get work done. Sometimes, this might frustrate the teacher, but they need to know that my bottom line is my child’s overall health, not any particular assignment.

I’ve attached an [example email](http://impactadhd.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Sample-eMail-to-a-Teacher.doc) that you use as the basis for communicating with your child’s teacher.

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