

Communicating with School for Best Student Outcomes

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CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

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Why

- Research demonstrates that parent – school collaboration enhances student achievement and protects mental health
- Students who live in systems that cooperate (family, school, community) feel safer bringing issues to their adults and are more likely to thrive

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First Remember...

- Avoid “over-saving” them
 - Necessary experiences
- Avoid over-scheduling/over-controlling their world
 - Need adult-free play time

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When to call school?

- When we are worried about bullying, unkind behavior, gossip, exclusion, kid safety
- When you see or hear something on social media (report to school, but deal with outside of school)
- When your student hates school – caveat is to avoid interviewing for injury

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When to talk to school?

- When we have a diagnosis
- When we see issues across contexts (home and school)
- When they have anxiety, fear, avoidance
 - Distress tolerance
 - Exposure

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How?

Effective Communication

- Talk about the facts
 - Use active listening (mirroring, summarizing)
 - Ask clarifying questions
 - Ask for concrete examples of blanket terms like “disrespect”, “off-task”, “shutting down”
- Check your emotions – it can be hard to hear/communicate these things.
 - Anger
 - Fear
 - Protective instinct

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Discuss problems with school
directly, with the counselor, with
the teacher, with principal

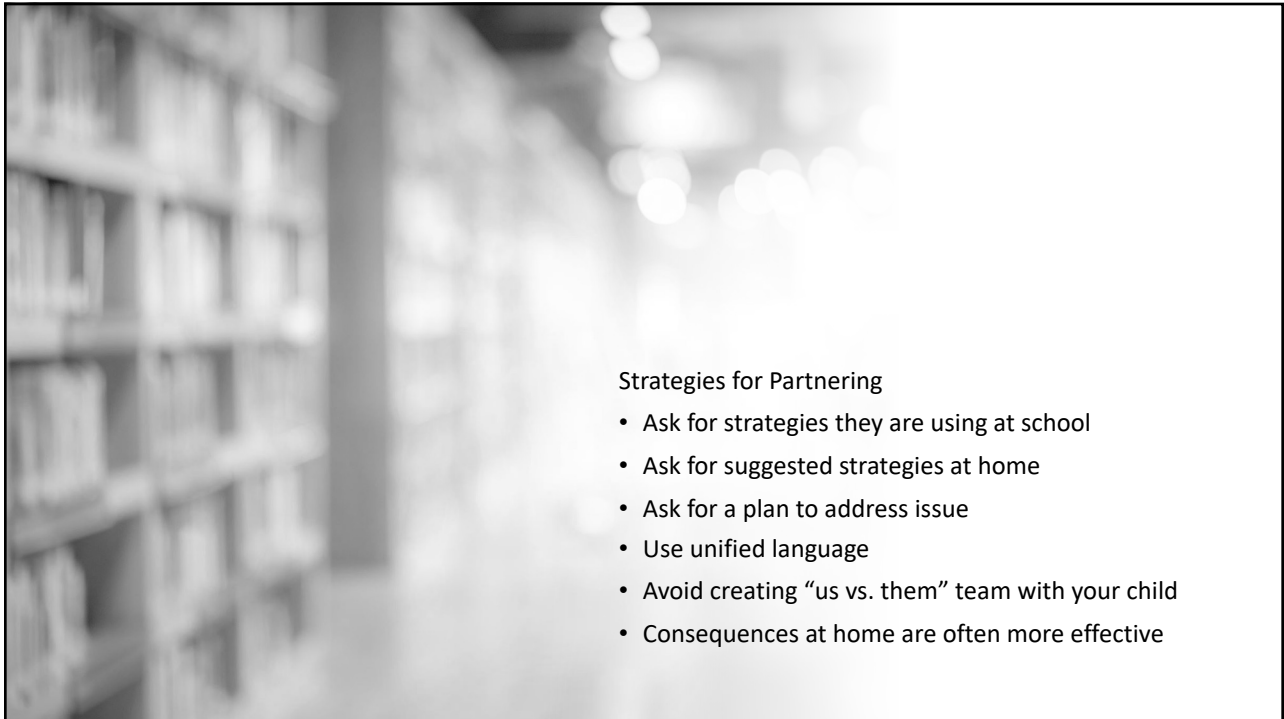
not other parents
not through email chains
not on social media

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- Advocating for our children can illicit a volcano of emotion
- Teachers also can feel a volcano of emotion
- Our child benefits best when we can listen and communicate


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Strategies for Partnering

- Ask for strategies they are using at school
- Ask for suggested strategies at home
- Ask for a plan to address issue
- Use unified language
- Avoid creating “us vs. them” team with your child
- Consequences at home are often more effective


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Skills you need to be an effective communicator in difficult conversations

- Self awareness
 - What scenarios trigger you emotionally
 - What makes you feel like you failed
 - What makes you angry
 - What makes you want to give up
 - How do these emotions manifest physically
 - What do you typically do to manage those feelings


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Skills you need to be an effective communicator during difficult conversations

- Self-management
 - STOP technique
 - Wait technique
 - Focused attention practices

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Skills you need to be an effective communicator in difficult conversations

Emotional Intelligence

- Mood Meter
- Expand emotional vocabulary
- Recognize your thoughts and emotions as temporary
- What is the most generous interpretation of a negative reaction?

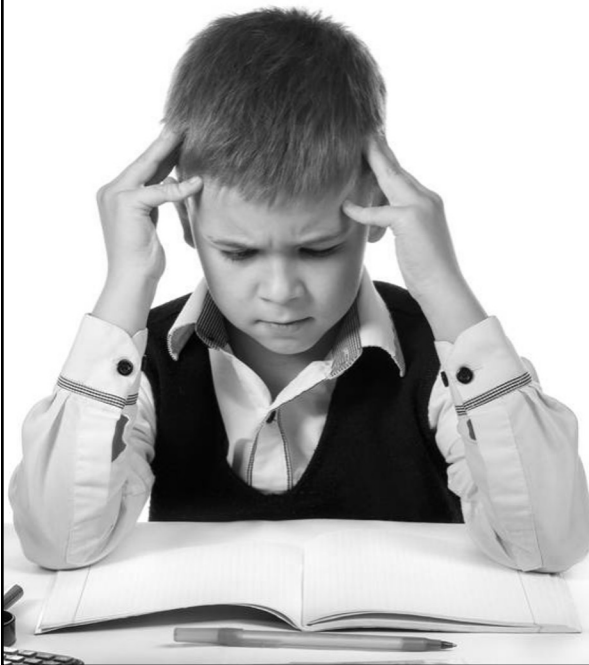
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Who? Exceptional Learners

- Students with disabilities
- Students with “high ability” “gifted”
- Twice exceptional

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Students With Disabilities

- Developmental disabilities
- Learning disabilities
- Medical diagnosis
- Neuro-diverse
- Often discovered in early childhood – through medical diagnosis, through teacher feedback, pre-school screening, Teachers as key reporters
- If you suspect a disability – early identification and early intervention is key
- Special education and early intervention
- 25% of students in classrooms have one or more disabilities that require special programming or accommodations (not always special education)

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Highly Able Children

- High-ability children spend more time engaging in solitary play than typical children
- High-ability children spent more time in literacy and arts-based centers than typical children (Wilson, 2015).
- By definition, the percent of the population that can be considered gifted is between 2 and 10%
- Gifted students who are served in general education classrooms frequently finish their work sooner than other students.
- This can happen in one subject area, such as mathematics, or in all subject areas.

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How?

- Find other students with similar gifts and challenges and create opportunities for them to work together.
- Students need intellectual peers to develop optimally.
- ability grouping during school or supplemental programs or Saturday or summer enrichment programs.
- Gifted students need to spend time with other gifted students.
- Students with disabilities need to spend time with similarly challenged kids. REPRESENTATION MATTERS

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Partnering with school is for everyone, not just parents of students with special needs or learning requirements

Avoid over-saving them from necessary experiences (disappointed, hurt feelings, left out, friendship ends, bad grade, not making a team or winning a competition)

If your child is distressed about school – reach out

If you hear or see something on social media that is concerning – reach out

Remember you are their primary role model

If partnering isn't working, reach out to principal, counselor, parish, me