

can be used as a guide to easily pass on personal information to your child's teacher. Also, in the 'For the Teacher' section, you will notice that information and strategies are contained in a user friendly format. Feel free to pass these on to your teacher. Perhaps the teacher would also like to read this book.

Communicating Through the School Meeting

School meetings held to discuss your child and his performance (or lack of it) can be a daunting event. As a new parent armed with information you can be excited at the prospect of the school taking such a keen interest in your child and may feel that finally you are not alone. Over a few meetings, the excitement wanes and is slowly replaced with frustration due to thoughts and comments such as *"Didn't we discuss this the last few times?" "Haven't I already explained why he does that?" "But nothing has changed! Has it?" "I'm not doing my part?"* Self-doubt creeps in and eventually, fear of the next meeting. *"What is there to say that anyone will listen to?"*

Firstly, what you offer at these meetings is crucial to a positive outcome for our child. The others sitting around the table might not acknowledge this but, remember, **you** know your child better than anyone else; and **you** have an understanding of ADHD that these teachers may never have. Why? They are not living with these children 24/7, 52 weeks and however many years. You may not have the teaching experience but that is why they are there, to use their expertise (training) to integrate their knowledge with yours and together produce a positive learning environment for your child.

In order to feel confident in meetings you need to understand your position, recognise your wealth of knowledge and information, and be prepared to pass this on to the teacher in order to equip him or her with the tools needed to work with your child. Very few teachers are trained in detail about how to deal with the issues of ADHD and Specific Learning Disabilities. Therefore, you may be confronting *their* feelings of frustration, inadequacy and/or insecurity (not just your own).

Strategies:

1. Write down the issues or topics you would like to discuss
2. Take notes of what is being said
3. Ask questions. For example, if spelling is an issue, ask what method they would suggest for teaching your child how to spell; have they already used this method and to what level of success; is this method different from that used for the rest of the class; is this method consistent with your child's style of learning (as indicated by his ADHD and LD assessments). Do not leave without being assured that the best possible method will be adopted.
4. Make a point of writing and saying that this method will be evaluated at the next meeting
5. Take another person with you. This may be your partner, a close friend, a family

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member or even your child's tutor. Explain to the person why you want them there, that is, moral support, to help you stay on track, for encouragement, as another pair of ears or even to take the notes.

6. Recognise and validate that secondary school teachers are not trained in how to teach children basic literacy skills. This is expected to be done at primary school. Secondary teachers focus more on content and other skills. Certainly, acknowledge secondary teachers' challenges and frustrations, they are real, but strategies and tools still need to be agreed upon for the benefit of your child. The issue can't be put in the too hard basket, it must be problem-solved using everybody's expertise. The use of technology and software could be part of the answer.

I had an interesting experience with my son. In primary school he had a tutor who was a trained secondary school teacher. My son really liked him and the situation was positive. When my son started secondary school we changed tutors. The new tutor was a trained primary school teacher. She was a fabulous person with whom my son related well.

By the time secondary school came about I'm afraid I didn't hold much enthusiasm or faith in the quarterly school meeting. The tutor, however, was extremely interested and had a number of questions and ideas she wanted to share. I was interested in how an objective person who knows my son would find such a meeting.

After the meeting, the tutor made comments such as – *"Please don't tell me this was a typical meeting."* *"Nothing was dealt with."* *"Nobody listened."* *"Nothing is going to change"*.

It was almost amusing to see the frustration and near anger rise up in this caring person. It also indicated to me just how 'dried up' as a parent I was becoming and how low my expectations of the school system had become. No righteous indignation here! I believe we must guard against this.

I also found encouragement from the tutor's attitude. I felt strengthened – it wasn't me; my previous expectations weren't too high; I didn't have to feel inadequate because I am not a trained teacher; there is actually more that could be done. Note to self – I must not be discouraged from doing the best I can for my child.

By the way, this lovely tutor was so outraged that she decided to do her Masters degree on children who faced similar issues. There *are* some interested and open teachers out there.

Homework

I am not a believer in children having a large amount of homework – especially in primary school. A small amount of revision of the week's work and reading – yes- but projects that specifically require parent's assistance – no. Children need free time just to be children and parents have enough to do!

So my opinion on homework for the child with ADHD will come as no surprise. The smaller the amount and the less complicated the task the better. Parents have enough