

Tips for Families on Setting Boundaries

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At the family level, there are many tasks that are expected and unexpected that require your attention on a daily basis. In addition to the tasks that are required of you, there are also tasks that you need other people to do in order for things to go the way they need to go for the family. Sometimes, this can make life feel like a constant hustle and bustle, with little to no time to rest from all of the movement. This can lead to high emotions, impulse responses, and poor health. But it shouldn't always be this way. And actually, it does not always have to be this way.

So, how do you set realistic expectations for yourself and for others to help improve the way things flow in your family? Well, you call a **C.A.B.** (Conversations, Advocacy, and Boundaries).

Conversations - Any partnership requires mutual communication. Having a partnership with the school will require communication, especially when expectations are relayed. Here are a few tips for engaging in conversation with a staff member:

- Talk with the staff member who set the expectation.
 - Enter the conversation from a place of understanding.
 - Ask for clarity to better understand the basis for the expectation.
 - Help them understand your family's circumstances that the expectation impacts/that impacts the expectation.
- Know your availability and the teacher's availability. This will help when trying to schedule a time to meet. Accept and respect that the teacher's availability may not align with your availability right away. Consider other ways to communicate if scheduling is challenging.
- Talk with the youth in your family about the expectation.
 - Encourage them to share their feelings and thoughts.
 - Share your feelings and thoughts.
 - Make a plan together for how the expectation will get met.

Advocacy

- Speak up for your child.
 - If you suspect that your child is having difficulty learning, request to have a Student Support Team meeting.
 - If your child has been through this process and needs more support, make a request for an IEP meeting.
 - If your child already has a 504 Plan or IEP, get support with understanding the documents.

- Speak up for yourself.
 - If you have specific needs, mention that. These needs could include a translator, larger text for paper documents, someone to summarize or further explain what a message or memo means, etc.
 - If you'd like to be more involved in your child's education but aren't sure how to, reach out to the school to ask about opportunities that align with your schedule. If nothing exists, create one!
- Speak up for what you see your school needs.
 - Reach out to policymakers at the local level, the state level, and the federal level. Write a letter, send an email, call in, or march at the next event to advocate for your family and your school.

Boundaries - Boundaries are important to set, uphold, and respect. It is important to enter the school year knowing that the teacher(s) will have boundaries and so should you. This is where understanding in this partnership can deepen. Here are a few boundaries you may consider:

- Boundaries about what you share in your personal life. Decide what needs to be disclosed to ensure that your child gets everything they deserve and need from school and to ensure the safety of everyone in the school community. Then communicate that and only that. Important Note: It is not recommended that you withhold information that is vital to the physical, mental, and emotional safety of your child, their peers, and the school community nor prevent your family from accessing resources.
- Boundaries around the school's at-home expectations. Being involved in your child's education is an important part of their success in school, but it is not the only way that they need you to help them be successful in life. Create boundaries that allow you to also support the other parts of your child's identity.

In the end, if we are all doing our part and calling a **C.A.B.** more often than not, then maybe, just maybe, it'll ultimately carry us and our education system from here to a place that requires less magic and is more real for everyone. To a place where families are healthily and effectively rewriting and living out the new narrative of setting and meeting realistic expectations. To a place where things in education flow as they should. And most importantly, to a place where things flow in your family as they should.