



NORD ANGLIA INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL HONG KONG
A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD
DAVID SHEEHAN

ADVOCACY

What does it mean to you?



When most people hear the word “advocacy,” they think of the efforts, even struggles, of individuals who take action to influence government programs and policies. Although many people engage in this level of advocacy, organizing to put pressure on policymakers and officials, advocacy can also take place on a more personal level. Advocacy of individual children remains necessary and important as each child is different and requires that they be treated and respected as so. It means making the case that something is important and needs to be done. When families advocate for their children that’s what they’re doing—presenting information and making requests in a focused way to ensure that something important gets done.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Children rely to a large extent on adults to speak on their behalf and protect their rights. Children need advocates, because they cannot look after their own interests.
- As a parent, you are in a unique position to identify and implement positive changes.



BEING AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE

The most important ingredients are:

- Understanding your child's needs
- Knowing the rules that govern your child's access to special education services
- Listening to others and ensuring others listen to you
- Following through so that progress is made in a timely manner.



POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS



Having a positive relationship with key staff members of your child's school is helpful and important. Your goal is to establish a strong, cooperative working group that includes your child's teachers, therapists, and other professionals along with the staff. Being actively engaged as a member of your child's educational team can win respect from the school personnel and provide you with useful information and connections.

SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY

There are a number of steps you can take to help bring others to see your point of view and meet your child's specific needs:

- Present clear reasons for your requests
- Provide accurate, helpful information
- Acknowledge others' viewpoints and contributions
- Apply persistent but polite pressure



This four-point approach can form the core of productive, effective advocacy for your child. But talking to other parents and advocates can provide you with critical support and ideas. Connecting with parents' groups and national organizations concerned with the well-being of children and adults is therefore another powerful tool.

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

What are your long-term goals for your child?

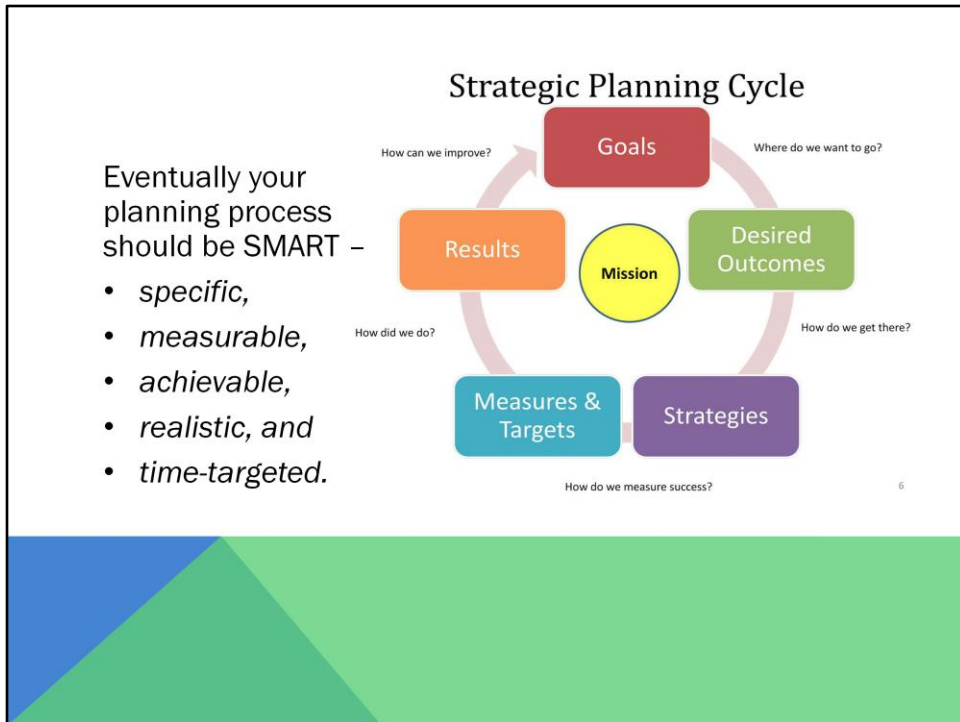
What do you envision for your child in the future?



Without a plan for the future you will find yourself without direction and benchmarks for measurement of success. Whilst it is understandable that you may not want to plan every detail of your child's life, without some sort of idea of what you want to achieve for your child, how will you be able to determine if your child needs help or not?

Don't get too worried, as you are probably like many parents, and don't have a master plan. Now that you are thinking about it you probably don't know where you are, where you need to go, or how to get there.

A master plan helps you to stay focused, anticipate problems, and prepare for the future. A good master plan should include goals for the future in academic and non-academic areas



Creating a plan as the foundation for your child’s achievement can be achieved by simply applying planning theory from business or other aspects of your life. This is not the first time that you have had to plan something.

GETTING YOUR CHILD INVOLVED

What if instead of just asking our children “What do you want to be when you grow up?”, we also ask them “Who are you now and who do you want to be when you grow up?”



GOALS:

Don't be too focused on narrowly defining a specific goal, as if one is too focused on attaining a specific goal they often ignore the need to learn new skills or acquire new information.

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

Where do we want to go? Outcomes are the benefits or changes your work brings about. A focus on outcomes helps with planning, ensuring that goals are designed with their purpose in mind, not just their practicality.

STRATEGIES:

How do we get there? What do you have to do to reach the goals? If you know how to achieve your goals, write it down, if you don't then write down the things that you need to do to find out.

MEASURES AND TARGETS:

How do we measure success? Some things are easier to measure than others. Academic assessment helps to benchmark achievement in this domain, but how can you identify achievement in other areas?

RESULTS:

How did we do? At the end work out if they are what we expected. Can we do better? Importantly, don't wait till the end point to do a review of your plan. After all, the end is often too late to make changes. Regular reviews allow you to tweak and modify your plan and also the strategies for achieving goals.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

You might not realise it but you are probably putting project management skills into place every day.

- Scheduling
- Resource allocation
- Risk management
- Budgeting
- Team management
- Change management
- Issue management



LEARN THE RULES

Although the rules differ, the basic categories apply to every school and education system.

- DEFINE THE CURRICULUM
- DEFINE THE CLASS STRUCTURE
- DEFINE THE COHORT STRUCTURE
- DEFINE THE ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

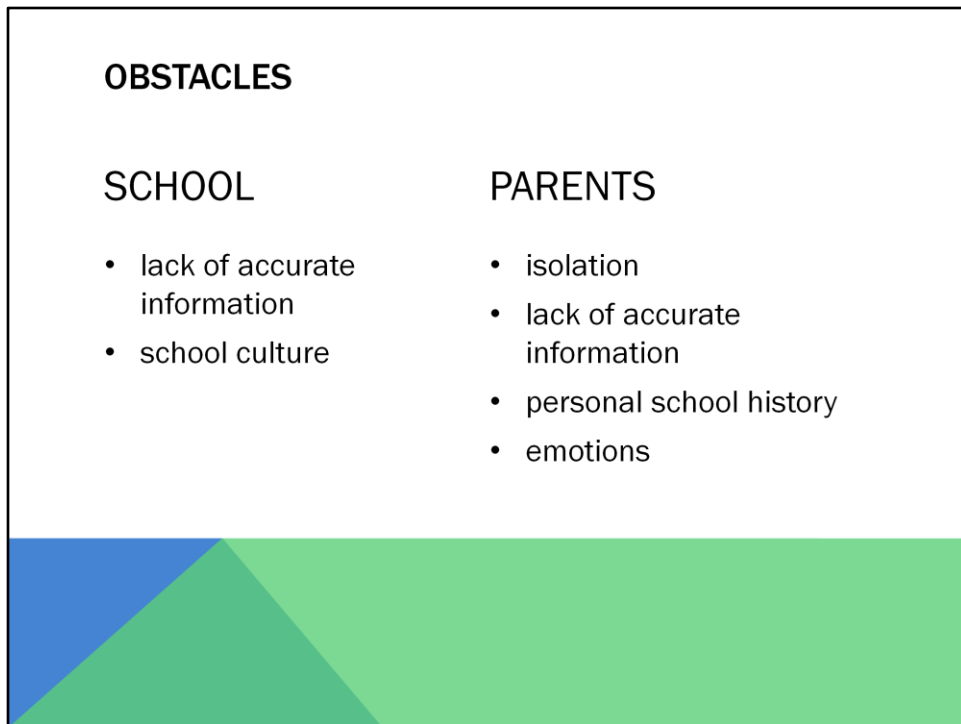


Rules about education and how to interact with the school are specific to different countries, states, education systems and of course educational philosophies. This does not mean that the skills you will learn here will not help you. What you will discover is a strategy that you should use to help determine the rules as they apply to you and your situation.

LEARN THE RULES

- WHAT ARE THE SCHOOL'S RULES FOR CONTACT?
- WHAT ARE THE SCHOOLS OBLIGATIONS FOR REPORTING?
- WHAT IS THE SYSTEM FOR PARENTS TO CONTACT THE SCHOOL?
- WHAT ARE THE MEDICAL OBLIGATIONS?
- DO YOU HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO DISCLOSE INFORMATION?
- WHAT IS THE SCHOOL'S DATA PROTECTION POLICY
- HOW CAN YOU GET HELP[FROM THE SCHOOL IF NEEDED?

Rules about education and how to interact with the school are specific to different countries, states, education systems and of course educational philosophies. This does not mean that the skills you will learn here will not help you. What you will discover is a strategy that you should use to help determine the rules as they apply to you and your situation.



As your child’s advocate, you will negotiate with your school or school district. When you negotiate, you will encounter obstacles. If you recognize obstacles, you can take steps to prevent problems. School obstacles include myths, lack of accurate information, and school culture. Parent obstacles are isolation, lack of accurate information, personal school history, and emotions.

As a parent, your emotions may be your Achilles Heel. To be an effective advocate, you must control your emotions and use them as a source of energy. We recommend that you to join a parent support group. When you take this step, you will begin to deal with your obstacles related to isolation and lack of information -- and you will get emotional support.

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

- When a child struggles in school, it is cause for concern. The first step in addressing this concern is gathering information.
- Next, with the appropriate information, you and the school work together to sort out what is going on and what might be needed.

Assessment is the foundation for making changes to support any child.



The concept of assessment for learning is not new. It is underpinned by the confidence and belief that every student is unique and possess the ability to learn, and that we should develop their multiple intelligences and potentials. To promote better learning, assessment is conducted as an integral part of the curriculum, learning and teaching, and feedback cycle.

Different modes of assessment are to be used whenever appropriate for a comprehensive understanding of student learning in various aspects. Feedback can then be given to students and teachers to form basis on decisions as to what to do to improve learning and teaching.

PARENT OBSERVATIONS GETTING SPECIFIC

When explaining your concerns about your child, being specific helps. Organize your information. Have work samples. Keep a log of specific behaviors. Showing something can sometimes be more powerful than telling something. For example;

- reading is hard, reads short passages
- doesn't want to read books unless they have pictures
- reads aloud fine, but can't summarize it aloud
- skips lines, adds words that aren't there, misses simple words
- doesn't want to read aloud; when does, reads slowly with difficulty
- my child is unhappy has stomachaches each day before school
- rips up, crumples, or throws out work or assignments



- messy handwriting math problems aren't lined up
- letters spill over the lines on the page
- pencil marks are so dark and she pushes too hard
- writes slowly and tires quickly
- doesn't listen instructions need to be repeated
- if there is a list of things to do, student does only the first
- gets headaches in loud places
- makes noises, sings, talks to self
- doesn't get his work done forgets books 3/5 days each week
- desk papers, backpack are a mess
- gets the right answer but takes a long time
- not realistic about work time needed
- can't remember math facts; doesn't know what month it is
- does fine on a spelling test one week, then can't spell the same words the next week
- reading is hard, reads short passages
- doesn't want to read books unless they have pictures
- reads aloud fine, but can't summarize it aloud
- skips lines, adds words that aren't there, misses simple words
- doesn't want to read aloud; when does, reads slowly with difficulty
- my child is unhappy has stomachaches each day before school

- rips up, crumples, or throws out work or assignments
- pokes holes in the cuffs of sweatshirts
- doesn't sleep well

GETTING ORGANISED

You will need a system for organizing this paperwork because it is a crucial component of effectively advocating for your child.

With well-organized records, you will be empowered as you go into meetings concerning your child's health or education.



Organise a file to collect evidence