

How to Advocate for Your Child's Education Parent Workshop

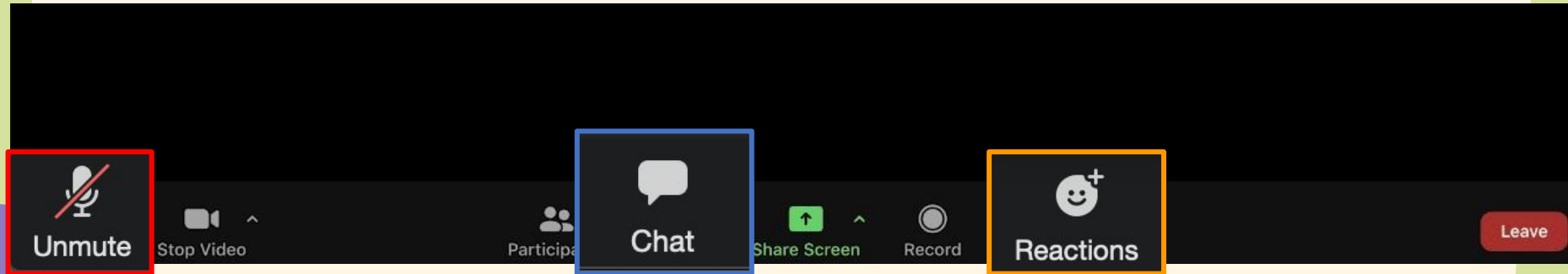


Presenter: Crissa Almughrabi



Welcome

- The links and this presentation will be posted on our website: u-46.org/U46EngageELL
- Comments and questions can be included in the **Chat** box
- Please keep your **microphone muted** and respect visual space.
- Use the **Reactions** option.



Introduction

Presenter: Crissa Almúghrabi

Dual Language teacher, 2-way Kindergarten
Nature Ridge Elementary School, U-46

Why this presentation?

- Survey responses from parents/guardians in U-46
- Studies have shown that family involvement is key to students' academic success. Advocacy is an essential component of being actively involved in your child's education.

Topics

1 What does advocate mean?

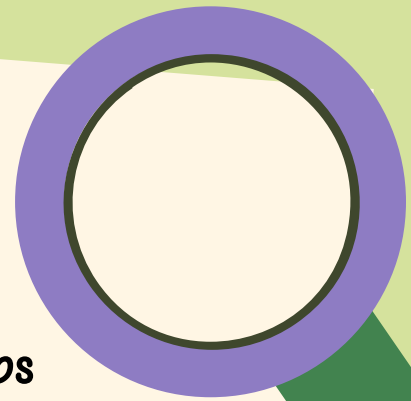
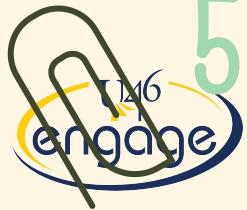
2 Forming Partnerships with schools

3 Communication: The Key to Effective Advocacy

4 Resolving Conflicts with School

5 Preparing Yourself for Meetings

6 Examples large and small



1 What does “advocate” mean?



What does “advocate” mean?

To **advocate** sounds very official, but it simply means to speak up when you have questions or concerns.

An advocate is ally. An advocate speaks up, stands up, on behalf of others.

Who can advocate?

- All parents and legal guardians!
- Students!
- Teachers and other school staff!
- No special training required

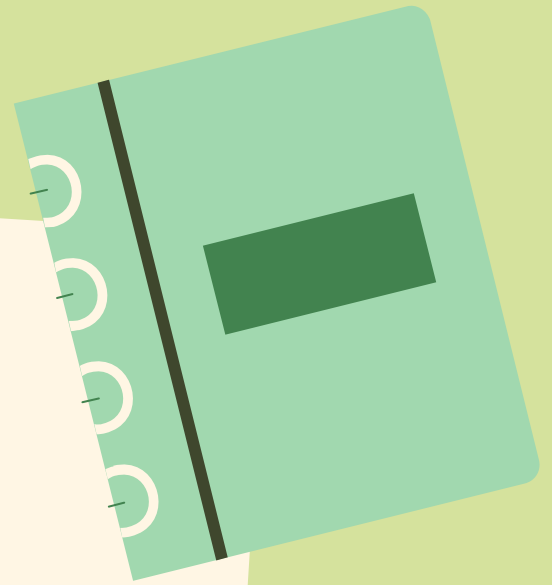
3 Keys for Effective Advocacy



- Develop good relationships with school staff.
- Learn about how the school district works (organization) and about the applicable laws and policies.
- Communicate ideas clearly.

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Forming Partnerships with Schools



Know who to contact in your school



Principal



Assistant Principal



School Secretary



Attendance Secretary



Social Worker



Classroom Teacher

★ Additional contacts: bilingual liaison, school nurse, PE teacher, Art teacher, Music teacher, social worker, special education resource teacher, speech therapist, school librarian, etc.

State and school district personnel



Dr. Carmen Ayala
State Superintendent of
Education



Tony Sanders
Superintendent of
School District U-46



Dr. Annette Acevedo
Director of the ELL
Program

Let's Talk link



The Let's Talk link on the district homepage is for communicating your questions and concerns at the district level.

www.u-46.org/letstalk



Organizations within U-46

- **AAAC** - African American Advisory Council
- **BPAC** - Bilingual Parents Advisory Committee is a district organization for parents/guardians of students in the ELL program
- **CAC** - Community Advisory Council
- **PTO** - Every elementary school has a Parent-Teacher Organization.



www.u-46.org/AdvisoryCouncils



Family Involvement: Education is a partnership

- Family involvement begins with parents/guardians ensuring that the student attends school every day and on time, that the student gets enough sleep, eats a healthy breakfast, and is dressed appropriately for school.

Elementary Handbook



Family Involvement (continued)



- Be in communication with your child's teacher.
- Make sure the school and your child's teacher have your current address, phone number and email address.
- Keep emergency contacts updated with the school.
- Read emails/newsletters from the teacher, school, PTO and the District.



Family Involvement (continued)



- Attend parent-teacher conferences and other meetings
- Attend school events with your family
- If a response is requested in school communications, please respond promptly
- **Ask your child** about school and how things are going (academics and friendships)



Family Involvement (continued)

Parent-Teacher Conferences:

- Do not wait until the school-wide conferences if you have questions or concerns!
- Ask if your child should attend, too.
- If you need an interpreter, please ask in advance so that arrangements can be made.



[MORE information](#)

[MÁS información](#)



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Communication: The Key to Effective Advocacy

Communication with your child's teacher

- What method of communication does the teacher prefer? (email, SeeSaw, Class Dojo, etc.)
- Do not be afraid to ask questions!
- Please be sure to share with the teacher information that may impact your child's health/safety and social-emotional well-being.

Communication with your child's teacher (continued)

- Health/safety and social-emotional well-being
 - Allergies (All! Foods, bites, stings, pet dander, etc.)
 - Medicines [policy]
 - Food prohibitions for religious reasons [law]
 - Holidays not celebrated for religious reasons [law]
 - Instances of name calling/bullying
 - Family issues that may impact learning



Note: these are only **some** examples. Every family's situation is unique.

Communication with your child's teacher (continued)

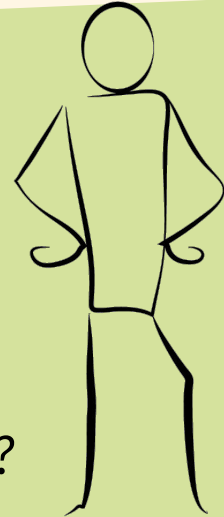
- Academics
 - Progress in the subject areas (reading, math, etc.)
 - Homework concerns
 - Speech and language services
 - Gross motor and fine motor development
 - IEPs and 504s [federal law]
 - Least restrictive environment
 - Accommodations

Communicating effectively

The “how” in communication

- Tone of voice
- Body language

Body language can be interpreted differently by different people. Is this person angry? Focused? Tired?



“Tone” in an email can easily be misinterpreted. Re-read emails to be sure you are clear before hitting send.

Communicating effectively (continued)

The “what” in communication

- Think about the purpose of the communication - to get information? To share a concern?
- Choose your words carefully. How will the listener (or reader of an email) interpret your message?
 1. Keep it simple - explain what you need clearly
 2. Give examples (if applicable)
 3. Repeat your point
 4. Ask questions

Communicating effectively: Ask questions!

- Of the teacher
- Of the school administration
- Of the district administration

Listen to the answers. Then ask more questions to clarify that you understood their response.

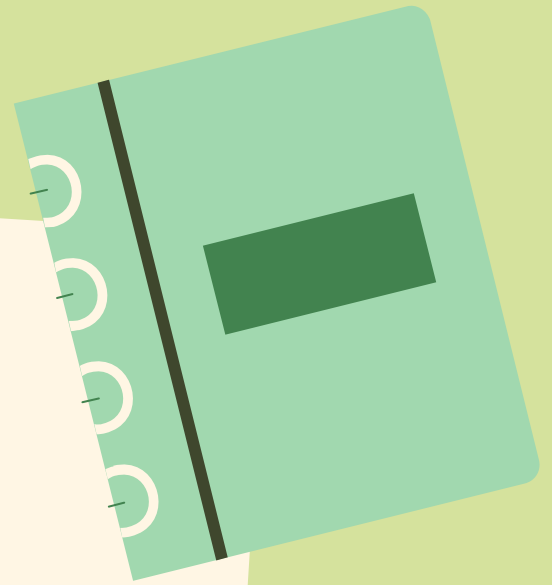
This may be all that is needed.

OR, this may only be the first step. Keep going.



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Resolving Conflicts with School



Five Steps to Getting Around Disagreement

Speak up. The sooner the better.

- Clarify
- Get their perspective
- Find common ground
- Add information
- State your position clearly



There is ALWAYS more than one way to solve a problem!

★ Start again where the conflict originated, and then go **up**
Teacher → Principal and Asst. Principal → Superintendent → School Board

★ Look within. Re-examine your goals. What do you and your child want to achieve? Make sure you haven't gotten stuck on points that aren't important to the main goal.

★ Network with other families that have been in a similar situation. How did they handle it? What advice do they have?
Legal resources?



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Preparing Yourself for Meetings



Meetings, both formal and informal

- Write down any questions you have. Outline points you want to make.
- Have ready any documents you may need to refer to.
- You may request an interpreter and bring a friend or family member with you.
- Take notes during the meeting.



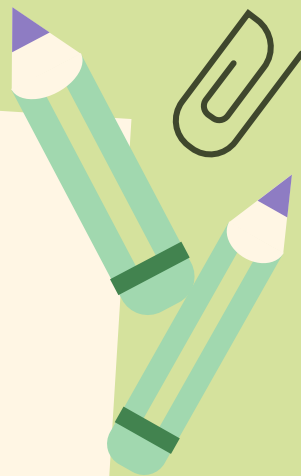
Meetings, both formal and informal (continued)

- Be sure to really listen, and make sure **you** are heard.
- Set goals and a timeline during the meeting.
- If you are asked to sign papers, you may do so, or you may ask for time to think about it.
- Clarify the points in the meeting.
- Follow-up later.



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Examples large and small





SITUATION

It is October and Matthew's teacher is using figures of Jack-o-lanterns on the math worksheets and in the math center.

CONCERN

Matthew's family does not celebrate Halloween. They are very uncomfortable with what Matthew is being asked to do.



SOLUTION

Matthew's mom explains the concern to the teacher. The teacher provides Matthew with different worksheets and math center work which address the same concepts being taught.





SITUATION

Dante's bus drops him off at his bus stop after school. As soon as Dante gets off the bus, he bursts into tears.

CONCERN

Another boy on the bus has been hitting Dante and throwing Dante's backpack on the floor for the last several days.



SOLUTION

Parent/guardian contacts the school administration (phone or email.)

Administrator gathers information from the parent and both boys. Administrator speaks with the bus driver. The other boy is assigned a permanent bus seat far from Dante.





SITUATION

Julie attended a 2-way dual language kindergarten at her home school. During the summer, her family moved to a different neighborhood in the district.

CONCERN

When her parents register her for first grade at her new home school, the secretary informs them that there isn't a dual language program at that school, and places her in a general education class.



SOLUTION

Parents contact the District's ELL department. Julie is provided with transportation to an elementary school that does have a dual language program.



Remember...

Families and schools share the same goals: the academic progress and the social-emotional well-being of your child.



Thank you



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