



Facilitating Collaborative Family-School Meetings

Prepare both staff and families to have a constructive meeting. Set a positive tone and use effective communication. Build trusting relationships and partnerships that establish high expectations and lead to positive outcomes. Value family diversity and the strengths that families bring to the team.

Before the Meeting

Welcoming the Family

- ❑ **Face to Face Meetings:** Determine a team member who can welcome and advocate for the family. If the family has never met the team before, this person should reach out to the family before the meeting, introduce, and welcome the family to the team, discuss the structure of the meeting, provide materials in advance, explain some of the meeting practices (e.g., going to the board), and explain team member roles.
- ❑ **Virtual Meetings:** Determine a team member who can reach out to welcome the family, orient them to the meeting structure, and explain team member roles. The team member should also ensure the family has a device that can be used for the virtual meeting. They should help the family download the technology or online platform that will be used and offer a brief tutorial on how to log in and access basic meeting features such as audio and camera.

Sharing the Agenda

- ❑ **Face to Face Meetings:** Send home the agenda with an embedded action plan in advance and frame some of the questions the parent will be asked so family members are prepared and comfortable when participating during the meeting.
- ❑ **Virtual Meetings:** The agenda with embedded action plan can be shared electronically via email or as an attached or linked document. Cue families to questions they might be asked so they can feel prepared and comfortable when participating.

Inviting the Student to Participate

- ❑ **Face to Face Meetings:** Encourage and support the student to join and participate in the meeting. Have a conversation with the family about some of the best ways to include the student. Listen to the family member's ideas and determine what preparations should take place.
- ❑ **Virtual Meetings:** Ask families how to best include their child, and encourage and support the student to participate. The student can attend the meeting virtually, either with the parent, or their own device.

Providing a List of Names and Roles for the Meeting

- ❑ **Face to Face Meetings:** Make sure families have a list of team members' names, roles, and contact information and know who they should reach out to with questions that come up later.
- ❑ **Virtual Meetings:** A list of team members' names, roles, and contact information can be shared electronically with a note about who to reach out to about questions.

During the Meeting

Starting the Meeting

- ❑ **Face to Face Meetings:** One team member should meet the family in the office, and provide support during the meeting.
- ❑ **Virtual Meetings:** One team member should be on call to provide technical support if the family member experiences any problems entering the virtual meeting.

Entering the Meeting

- ❑ **Face to Face Meetings:** Be thoughtful about the conversation that is occurring as the parent enters the room. If you stop conversing when the family member enters, it might be perceived you are talking about the family or their child. If the conversation refers to other students, you could be breaching confidentiality.
- ❑ **Virtual Meetings:** The meeting facilitator should welcome participants by name as they enter the meeting. The host should wait until the family is in the waiting room before accepting participants to enter the virtual meeting so the families are not the last to arrive.

Designing a Meeting Space

- ❑ **Face to Face Meetings:** Provide a comfortable space for the family – have enough seats, have table space for them, and make it as easy as possible for them to enter and leave the room.
- ❑ **Virtual Meetings:** Provide a comfortable virtual space for the meeting. Keep cameras on, as this provides a level of respect to the family and reassures them all team members are there to listen and actively participate. Maintain respectful meeting etiquette (e.g. phone not in use, computer being used only for meeting purposes), as eye gaze and engagement remain notable.

Building a Positive Room Dynamic

- ❑ **Face to Face Meetings:** Make sure the family isn't alone on one side of the table facing school professionals on the other side. This can set up an "us vs them" dynamic in the room.
- ❑ **Virtual Meetings:** All participants can add their names and roles to their video image so parents know the team member's connection with the student.

Setting a Positive Tone

- ❑ **Face to Face Meetings:** Have some initial light conversation to increase connection and comfort. Make sure this is friendly, interactive, and genuine. Determine who will steer the team from light conversation to the meeting structure. Make sure this is someone who has a positive and supportive relationship with the family.
- ❑ **Virtual Meetings:** Remain in grid view during initial light conversation to support positive connections and the comfort of the family. Have a team member who is identified to steer conversation to the meeting structure, at which time the meeting facilitator can begin to share screen with the agenda.

Introducing Meeting Guidelines

- ❑ **Face to Face Meetings:** Have some basic meeting guidelines written on the board or displayed on the table and review these norms with all team members as the meeting begins.
- ❑ **Virtual Meetings:** Explain the guidelines for virtual meetings. How do people let others know when they wish to speak? Should participants be muted when not talking? If you have them, the team can review their PBIS expectations for virtual meetings as a segue into the meeting process.

Using the Board

- ❑ **Face to Face Meetings:** When generating ideas or capturing the thinking of the group, go to the board and write ideas down. Ensure the ideas of all members, including those of family members, are documented without dismissing or filtering. Continue using the board throughout the meeting. Make sure the family member doesn't feel singled out either because they *don't* have ideas on the board, or because *only* their ideas are on the board.
- ❑ **Virtual Meetings:** When generating ideas or brainstorming, use a virtual whiteboard to capture ideas. Ensure the ideas of all members, including those of family members, are documented without dismissing or filtering. The meeting facilitator can share their screen, making the agenda and white board visible to all participants. Make sure the family member doesn't feel singled out either because they *don't* have ideas on the whiteboard, or because *only* their ideas are on the whiteboard

Ending the Meeting

- ❑ **Face to Face Meetings:** When the meeting is finished, everyone should leave. The team should not stay in the room to debrief or follow up. If the team needs to connect further, a different meeting should be created.
 - ❑ **Virtual Meetings:** When the agenda and action plan have been completely addressed, the host can return to grid view. Participants can say goodbye and the host should close the meeting for everyone.
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After the Meeting

Thanking the Family

- ❑ **For Both Face to Face and Virtual Meetings:** A designated team member can send a handwritten or email thank you to the family for their time and input, and include a copy of the action plan if one was created.

Taking Action

- ❑ **For Both Face to Face and Virtual Meetings:** Team members should follow through with action items by the completion dates indicated on the meeting action plan.