

Ventura County Special Education Local Plan Area
Community Advisory Committee (CAC)



Information Alert for Parents of Special Education Students

How Does My Communication Style Affect My Interactions With Others?

Do you know your communication style? How about your spouse's style? Understanding your own communication style and recognizing styles in others can impact how you choose to interact with people.

IEP meetings can be stressful at times, and occasionally the behavior of the adults is not helpful in coming to "win-win" solutions for your child. A goal would be for all of us, parents and professionals, to behave courteously and assertively with each other, regardless of agreement.

Here are some styles and how you can respond to them, both in yourself and others:

Aggressive style – look for:



- Clenched fists
- Glaring eyes
- "Blaming" statements (i.e., "you should've ...")
- Angry words

Ideas if feel *yourself* being too aggressive:

- Sit back in your chair, breathe
- Unclench your fists
- Try to shift from anger and blame to constructive suggestions for solutions for your child

Ideas if you feel *someone else* is being aggressive:

- Try to remain calm
- Try not to become defensive
- Try to focus on suggestions for solutions for your child
- Ask for a break

Passive style – look for:



- Downcast eyes
- Sighing, tears
- Negative statements such as "whatever" or "it doesn't matter," etc.
- Consenting even if not in agreement

Ideas if you feel *yourself* being too passive:

- Ask for clarification of what is being suggested
- Ask for examples of how it will help your child
- Get someone to support you at the meeting (sponsor, friend, teacher, etc.)

Ideas if you feel *someone else* is being too passive:

- Ask what they would suggest
- Suggest they take the information and "think about it" before deciding
- Suggest they ask for support

Assertive style – look for:



- Calm, clear voice
- Good eye contact
- "I" statements rather than blame or accusation (i.e., "I feel that...")
- Brainstorming reasonable solutions for others to consider
- Bringing the discussion back to "What's best for the child?"

With parents and professionals working together with an assertive communication style and treating each other with courtesy and respect, we will be able to accomplish great things for our special education students!

We have lots of informational materials for you! Go to our website and click on "Information for Families."

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