

Advocating for Your Child at School



Being the parent or caregiver of a child with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) means you will often meet people who don't know about DLD or aren't sure what to do. This may even occur at your child's school. This can be a frustrating experience, but also a great opportunity to raise awareness and advocate for your child's needs.

Advocating is not a one step process (unfortunately). It will often take many opportunities to develop a plan. You may then need to revisit your plan as your child changes teachers or transitions to high school where they have many teachers. Here are our tips for helping you to be a proactive, knowledgeable and confident advocate for your child.

Help your child's teacher get to know them

Use our 'Get to Know Me and DLD' resource to prepare helpful information for the teacher.



Get to know your child's teacher

You might be able to help in the classroom or perhaps take some time to show an interest in the teacher as a person. This can help build trust.



Believe your child's teacher has their best interest at heart

Teachers are drawn to the profession, because they want to help.



Be well informed and learn from the research

Access information and resources from experts who have a lot of experience with DLD. This can help you understand your child's needs and determine what is reasonable. There are a lot of "snake oil merchants" trying to sell expensive or unhelpful resources, so tread carefully!



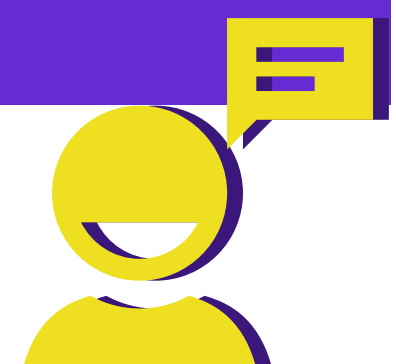
Don't wait

It is often easier to solve a smaller problem before it has grown into a bigger problem.



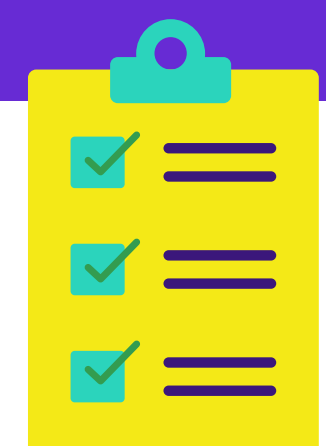
Always make time to talk

Schools are busy places and teachers are often supporting other children with diverse needs. Email or call to arrange an appointment rather than catching them at the start or end of the day.



Be prepared

Send a list of questions beforehand so the teacher has time to prepare to make the meeting as productive as possible. You may wish to share information from your speech pathologist or other therapists to help the teacher understand the individual needs of your child.



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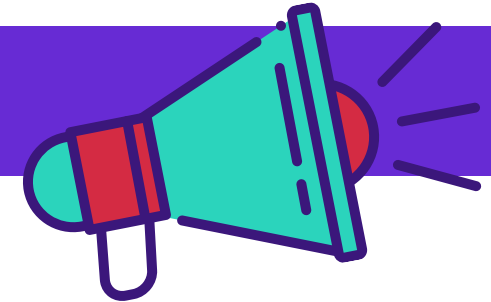
Approach meetings as equal and willing partners

You are bringing lots to the table that can help the teacher. Reassure them you're looking for solutions that help your child, but also support the teacher.



Remember, you are the expert

Nobody knows your child better than you.



Communication is a two-way street

It is important to use professional language while being open and honest. Remember to listen to what the teacher has to say while addressing concerns.



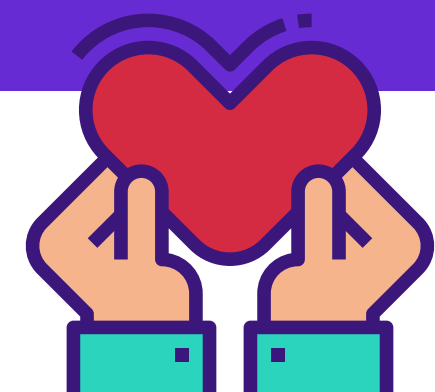
It is ok to think about it

Sometimes situations can become tense or you feel rushed into making a decision. Take the initiative to say you need to think about what has been discussed and then follow up with an email or another conversation.



Trust your 'gut'

You are using your knowledge and experience to rapidly assess information. If something isn't feeling right, ask questions and find out more. If you feel strongly about doing something, then focus your efforts on finding a way to communicate your concerns.



Be flexible

It is ok to develop a plan that continues to change over time. Think back to when you were 5, 10 and 15 years old. Were you doing the same thing at each age?



DLD is still a relatively new term and people have been calling it lots of different names (e.g. specific language impairment, language disorder). Advocating means you will be helping your child, as well as all children with DLD to succeed in the school setting into the future!

Top tip: Don't forget DLD Awareness Day held annually around the world in October. Why not encourage your school to hold an event to raise awareness and understanding. Check out RADLD.ORG for more information and resources.

