Children with additional learning needs

Families of children with additional learning needs can feel isolated and uncertain about their children's future. Schools can help families to find the facts and support they need to understand that they are not alone and that help is available within the community as well as the school. Teachers can help families feel more comfortable discussing their children's future by listening to the families - who know their children better than anyone else - and by explaining school programs and answering questions in a way that families can easily understand.

What school leadership can do

Teachers and families need support from the school and the community to help children with additional learning needs reach their full potential.

School Leadership can help teachers and families by:

- establishing Family Resource Centres to help families and teachers develop good working relationships
- organising information sessions to help families understand the education system and the role of the family in cooperative planning, as well as offering workshops on topics requested by families
- making available up-to-date information and resources for families and teachers.
- supporting the establishment of Student Support Groups where required.

What teachers can do

Some general guidance for teachers includes:

- making it clear to families that you respect their role as carers, supporters and advocates who are committed to making life better for their children
- making it clear to families that you are committed to providing their child with excellent education opportunities and support
- providing families with information about community support groups, additional services in the school and the community and family-to-family groups
- offering to give families referrals to helpful organisations, service providers, associations and groups
- encouraging families to organise support systems, notifying families who might be able to share experiences with each other during school activities
- discussing a child's talents with his or her family and use that positive approach as a bridge to discuss other issues.
- developing individual learning plans with clear goals and strategies to support the student

Adapted from “Reaching All Families – Creating Family-Friendly Schools” Office of Educational Research and Improvement – U.S. Department of Education