

## INTRODUCING YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL STAFF: A PORTFOLIO

As we begin a new school year there is probably an abundance of information that you would like to share with school staff. A portfolio is a great way to provide information to share with multiple people who interact with your child. It can be a few pages stapled together with just a few pictures or in a portfolio folder with more pictures or work samples. It depends on your time and your creativity. Appearance is not as important as the content. If your child has multiple teachers, you can provide more than one copy. This is a chance to provide very pertinent information to staff. If you create this on the computer, you can save it to update the following year. It can be written as if the child is sharing information.

Not everything you suggest may be possible in a school setting, but knowledge is a powerful tool for the staff.

A portfolio should include the following information. You can omit anything and add additional information that you might consider important. It is best to be relatively brief and to the point.

- I. **Introduction:** Age, birthday, who lives at home (or homes), days spent at different homes, pets, other important family if they are in town. Pictures of key players and pets are always nice.

Inform staff of life changing events influencing your child such as divorce, death of a family member or pet, birth of a sibling or a new sibling on the way, or relocating.

- II. **Strengths/Interest:** What does your child do well? What does he enjoy? What are his special interests? Does he help at home with certain chores, jobs, tasks? Does he like to read and look at books? If so, what type of books? Does he like to watch or participate in certain sports? Are there particular characters, movies, or shows that your child likes? All this information may be helpful in engaging the child in conversations, reading, and writing.

- III. **Communication:** How does your child communicate? Does he use sign language (if so share a list with staff)? Are pictures or symbols part of the communication process? What strategies do you use if he is not understood? Do you have key phrases that help with routines and expectations? Will your child ask for help when he needs it? Do you generally ask yes/no questions to get your child to participate or offer choices? Do they need extra time to process request? Do you use gestures and pictures to clarify what you are saying? How do you introduce your child into new situations with peers? Are there any special tools/words that you use to help

reinforce social rules such as personal space, staying on topic, initiating conversations?

- IV. **Behavior:** What strategies do you have to avoid unwanted behavior? Do you use First, Then, visuals, offering choices, a reward system, positive words, hugs, high fives, earned time for something special (what is that something)? Do you use time out? What are your expectations during time out? Where does the child go for time out? Do you always warn about upcoming transitions? Are these verbal or visual symbols? Does he need frequent breaks (how often is that, how long of a break, etc.)? What additional information would help staff work with your child?
- V. **Learning environment:** Does your child learn best sitting in a certain spot? Does he need a visual model of what is expected? Is he a visual learner? Is hearing instruction a problem? What helps if hearing is an issue? Are fine motor skills an issue? Will he need help cutting or gluing? Will he need help with organization? Is a well-defined process for task in the classroom (where finished papers are placed, where is the glue) needed? Does it help to stand to work, sit on the floor, or be in a small group?
- VI. **Challenges:** Are there special challenges that you feel that your child has, especially related to classroom or academic expectations, or peer interactions? Are there certain activities that your child does not enjoy or causes frustration? Does your child have sensitivities to textures, sounds, or certain foods?
- VII. **Medical Information:** Is there anything staff should be aware of such as allergies, hearing aids, toileting issues, changes in medication, unsafe activities for participation?
- VIII. **Safety:** Can the child independently navigate the school (inside and outside)? Is running away or leaving the group a concern? Any other concerns to share?