

**Express Yourself!**

**Tip Sheet**

**Be Prepared.** Know what your goals are before you go in, and which are top priority. Ask yourself: what do I want to walk out of this meeting with?

**Have an Agenda.** Jot down an agenda that includes how will you open up, the order of topics to be discussed, and how you’ll wrap things up. If you’re with a group, assign a facilitator and someone who is in charge of each section.

**Know Your Audience.** Connect your issues to what you know is important to others in the meeting. Listen closely to their beliefs and approach and refer back to that: “You said you’re concerned about treating all students equally, so I know you’ll want to make sure that no student is referred to special education before all the options have been explored.”

**Start Off on the Right Foot.** Make sure that everyone in the meeting introduces themselves before you begin, to put everyone on equal footing. Project confidence by using positive body language: make eye contact, don’t look at your phone and don’t engage in side conversations.

**Think Through Your “What Ifs”.** Before you get to the meeting, think through what issues may come up in the meeting, and be prepared for how to handle them. Run through some scenarios: what if they tell us \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? What if they ask us to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

**Get to the Point and Stick to It.**No one likes to be lectured. Practice making your point powerfully and concisely and not repeating yourself. Let people know when if the discussion has drifted to a tangent and repeat the topic under discussion. You can say things like “we can follow up on that issue in another meeting, but now let’s get back to our discussion of….”

**Take Notes.** Make sure that you or someone in the meeting is taking notes on the main points of discussion and the agreements that are reached so that you can go back to them afterwards.

**In Conclusion….** At the end of the meeting, restate the main points of agreement to confirm that everyone has the same understanding. It’s okay if there wasn’t agreement on everything. You can still summarize the topics on which you did make progress: “We still have a lot to discuss, but it seems that we agree that \_\_\_\_\_\_. Is that right?”

**Follow Up.** Make it clear who is responsible for following up on each agreement or task that was decided on. If there is still unfinished business at the end of the meeting, don’t leave before you schedule the next meeting or decide on another appropriate next step, such as gathering additional information or talking to additional people about the issue.