

Advocacy Guide for Using the F-Words at School

The F-Words - *Function, Family, Fitness, Fun, Friends, and Future* - can be very helpful at school. This document includes templates for how to present information during a school meeting and for a letter that can be included in your child's file. The following instructions are to help you fill in the templates and get ready for the meeting.

At the beginning of the meeting - greet everyone, introduce yourself and your child. For example:

Hello everyone,

*My name is **(Add Parent's name)** and I am a parent of **beautiful (or any adjective that you like) (Child's name)** who is now ____ years old.*

*As you can see in your documents, **he/she** is diagnosed with **(add your child's medical diagnosis here)**.*

*Before I start explaining **his /her** challenges and needs caused by **his/her** diagnosis, let me tell you first how wonderful **he/she** is using my documents! Let me tell you about **his/her** abilities.*

Now, introduce everyone to the F-words approach, so people can see that it is based on the research. I would say something like:

*At this time I will use a strengths-based approach, applying the 'F-words' in Childhood Disability. These are grounded in the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (the ICF). F-Words in Childhood Disability are described in a published paper written by CanChild's Drs. Rosenbaum and Gorter, titled: "The 'F-words' in Childhood Disability: I swear this is how we should think!" These six F-words, that the authors state should be the focus in all discussions about childhood disability, are: **Function, Family, Fitness, Fun, Friends, and Future.***

Now you can introduce the 'F-words' Tools that can be used to help others get to know your child:

- *The F-words Agreement* - This is a document that represents an informal but serious pact between **(Child's name)** and whoever they rely on for support; (Hand in F-words agreement and read together so people can have a grasp of the meaning of the F-words);
- *The F-words Collage* - Make a F-words collage ahead of time and explain each picture in the context of the F-words. Explain why these pictures are meaningful. Example: For Function **(Child's name)** likes to play soccer and go bowling.
- *The F-words Profile* – Hand in profile, for them to read and keep in **his/her** file; say something like: Please keep this in **(Child's name)** file. This document can tell you a lot about **(Child's name)** and **his/her** favorite things.

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- *The F-words Goal sheet* – Prepare goals for your child ahead of time and clearly describe why these goals are important to your child and your family. If you wish, use provided sheet for notes to write down examples. Say something like: These are our goals for school. Please help us try to organize **(Child's name)** day so we can achieve them.

Suggestions for introducing the F-Words Goal Sheet:

When you talk about achieving goals you will talk about your child's strengths and abilities, as well as your child's needs, things that are challenges and how to overcome them. Give an example for each goal and include people at the table in conversation. *For example:* my son's goal is to improve his communication skills with his Tobii. I would say:

"As you know, (Child's name) is non-verbal and he use YES/NO on his wheelchair for quick response, and his Tobii device for communication. He is still learning how to use it, and together we can help him improve."

"He needs to learn where certain words are located, so when he wants to say something he doesn't need to think about where to find the word. We can achieve this by showing him flash-cards – for example, picture of a man riding a horse. You can now ask him "What is this man doing?" or "What animal is in the picture?".

Now you can include the school speech language pathologist – for example you can ask: Do you have some other ideas? Can you help us printing the flash cards? Can you follow his progress? Now the Resource Teacher – for example: When do you think we can fit this activity in during the day? Do EAs need some additional training to do this?

Continue like this for each goal!

Wrap up the meeting and thank everyone:

*Thank you for taking the time to learn about **(Child's name)** and what is important to him/her and to our family.*