

## Sample eMail to a Teacher:

Dear Teacher,

We want to start by saying thank you -- for your efforts with our child, for your deep caring that is evident in your communications, and for putting in the extra effort to try to help our child find success this year. We are so grateful for your commitment to academic excellence, and to helping your students become life-long learners.

In response to your email, we had a very long and very productive meeting with our child, and have some good plans in place.

Before we share them, we want to clarify and respond to what we sense is an underlying frustration and question in your email. When you asked, "do you see a reason" why our child... isn't as responsive to the incentives as we'd like, isn't getting the math done, etc., there is a very clear answer.

Our child has **significant deficits in processing speed and memory-- particular short term memory**. I've attached his recent evaluation results so that you can see what he is struggling with [*note: charts are great if you've got them. Go into some detail about the disparity between skills. For example, we might write: executive processing speed is in the 31st percentile, a VERY SHARP contrast to his auditory processing skills in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile.*] As you can imagine, this leads to extreme frustration for him. He knows he's smart, and can't quite figure out WHY he can't "just get it done." Bottom line: he does not have the "Get It Done" button that typical kids with even average executive functioning are able to use.

Our child's challenge is not that he does not have a structure or environment at home for him to do his homework. He does homework every night. Rather, a few factors are at play. First, he is extremely easily distracted -- particularly by the end of the day (by 5 p.m. his concentration is like that of a 7 year old). Second, he gets caught up in writing because he wants to do it well, and often runs out of time before he gets to math. And finally, sometimes he's still not clear on exactly what needs to be done. I know that seems frustrating because we feel like he should know or remember, but that's just not always going to be

the case.

We are helping Our child to understand how his brain works -- and how it doesn't. He is becoming increasingly more open to use systems and structures to assist him -- a huge improvement for him! We're also doing a lot with brain health to try to enhance his processing speed. It takes time to see results, but we're committed to helping his brain function as efficiently as possible.

It's important to remember that this is not going to be a quick fix with Our child. We have to continue to try different systems to figure out what will work for him. Perhaps this is something that the learning specialist at school can help us all figure out. We'd like to meet with you and the learning specialist to discuss how we can all team up to help best prepare Our child for Junior High! We understand his challenges, but do not have an arsenal of solutions as deep and thorough as the learning specialist! :) Please let us know how to proceed in scheduling some time for the 'team' to talk.

In the mean time, Our child could use some reinforcement from you in two areas: a modified approach to motivating him, and an emphasis on success in **using the systems** instead of the work produced.

1. Our child is strongly motivated by acknowledgment, understanding and playfulness. Right now, he feels like he is constantly disappointing you. In his opinion, he is doing **MUCH** better in getting his work done -- we are certainly seeing a more motivated, engaged student at home -- and he feels like he only hears about what he is not getting done. He would respond well to:

- Acknowledgment of what he is doing well! Even the smallest things.
- Acknowledgment of how hard it is for him, of how hard he's trying and of how much **he cares** about doing well.
- A little levity. As typical with ADD kids, he's actually more likely to get it done if he doesn't take it too seriously and is allowed to be playful in the process!

2. At this stage, we need to reward Our child for using any systems and structures to help him get on task and stay on task. That means

acknowledging when he seeks you out to meet with him, and when he remembers to do assignments or turn something in, and when he writes something down on a list, and especially when he remembers to use it! I think we would all agree that the goal here is to foster a life-long learner. For Our child, at this stage of his development, that means the emphasis on PROCESS is more important than the emphasis on content. We should discuss reduced work-load as a possible accommodation in order for him to focus on figuring out HOW to get his work done.

We are open to any suggestions that you have for us to try. Many thanks for all you are doing to support Our child! And thanks for sticking with it when it gets frustrating. ADD kids are fabulous, but they can definitely be frustrating!

Warmly,

Our Child's Parents :-)