

TABLE 3.3

Working With Families

BEST PRACTICE	RATIONALE
Start early	As soon as a student with a disability is accepted into a charter school, initiate a conversation between the family and educators to begin planning for the upcoming school year. Starting this conversation early can help both families and educators start the year off positively. To help all involved better understand the needs of the student, it is helpful to have copies of any recent neuropsychological testing, previous IEPs, or other documents. This conversation is an excellent opportunity to have the new team discuss every party's goals, dreams, and aspirations for the school year and beyond.
Work together	Families and schools should work together to think about a student's strengths and challenges, including identifying strategies that have worked well—or not so well—in the past when planning for the future. Getting to know a new student is a priority for the charter school, and any information families can provide about the child's learning style, behavior, or social attributes can be helpful in starting the year off positively. Throughout the year, families and educators should continue to communicate observations about strategies that resonate with the student.
Involve students	Helping students understand the importance of recognizing what they need and asking for it—a skill known as self-advocacy—may take time and practice to master but allows students to take ownership of their learning, communicate their needs to help accomplish their goals, and build their self-confidence. Together, schools and families can encourage children to consider solutions to their challenges and help them understand appropriate ways of communicating their needs.
Monitor progress	It is important for families to understand how progress will be measured against the student's IEP or Section 504 plan and the process for updating the individual student's education plan. These documents serve as the blueprint for the individualized instruction and accommodations provided to the child. The family and school team should have a mutual understanding of the frequency with which student plans are implemented and updated.