



## How to communicate special needs concerns to parents

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5 Nov 2014  
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8 Nov 2014  
*Little Star International School Fair*

### ELG Academy

ELG Academy consists of a series of workshops and other events tailored exclusively to educators, school administrators and other professionals working in the international education communities of Shanghai.

For more info:  
[elgacademy@chinaelg.com](mailto:elgacademy@chinaelg.com)

#### Date & Time

November 5  
Wednesdays  
1pm to 4pm

#### Location

ELG  
Jinqiao Campus  
No.50 Lane 221  
Huangyang Rd  
Pudong District  
浦东新区黄杨路  
221弄50号

#### Cost

800 RMB

[Register Here](#)



### Effective Communication in the School Setting

*Participants in this interactive workshop will learn techniques to communicate honestly and directly with parents, in a non-threatening way.*

This workshop will introduce participants to coaching skills and examine how to use these tools in everyday interactions with parents, faculty and students. This workshop will specifically focus on navigating difficult conversations, including turning problem-focused conversations into solution-focused conversations. Coaching skills that will be covered include direct communication, reframing, listening at a deeper level and powerful questioning. Participants will bring real-life examples and practice coaching in this interactive workshop.

#### About the speaker Kimberly Link

Kimberly Link is a personal and professional coach with a background in experiential education and athletics. She is passionate about partnering with people as they learn to recognize their strengths and how they can be used to set and reach goals.

Kimberly uses solution focused coaching as a tool to help parents and teens set goals and identify ways to use their strengths as they engage in self-directed, self-initiated change. Coaching sessions help clients to gain clarity by answering powerful questions and having a sounding board to reflect back what they are expressing.

Kimberly holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Recreation and Leisure Studies from Gordon College, a Master of Arts in Sports Administration from Wayne State University and has completed a Graduate Certificate in Executive and Professional Coaching at the University of Texas at Dallas.

**Upcoming Workshop On 26 November 2014** [\(Click to RSVP\)](#)

### Language Differences vs. Language Disorders

Led by: **Amihan Tayag, Reyhaneh Rajabzadeh**

A workshop aims to increase the awareness on the communication characteristics of children who come from linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## The Innovative Learning Center News



Dr. Shari Rosen, ILC Program Director and ELG Co-Founder, was invited to be the keynote speaker at *The International Symposium of Intervention for Children with ASD and Other Developmental Disabilities In Both Mainland China and Taiwan*.

The symposium is sponsored by Southwestern University, Chongqing Ninth People's Hospital, Taiwan Psychological Association and Taiwan Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Association. Professors from America North Carolina Center College, as well as professors and specialists of special education in mainland China and Taiwan, were invited to give talks in the conference.

Dr. Rosen's talk was on ASD: The Role of Speech-Language Pathologists.

## A Difficult Conversation

## Communicating Special Needs Concerns to Parents

Approximately 15% of children will experience a learning disability of some kind. This means that almost every teacher will encounter such a child at some point in their career. But how to share your initial concerns with the parents? We asked our Clinic Director, Karlijn De Hoon, to share her thoughts regarding how to approach that difficult conversation.

**It is important to speak out; studies show that the earlier a child starts to have help with their learning difficulties, the more likely they are to succeed in coping with them.**

convince and provide them with information they may need to cope with this. Ask a colleague to observe the child, or maybe a school counselor to conduct an assessment. Any exam records are useful, especially if they show trends over time. If you can, ask the parents casually if they have noticed anything similar to what your concerned about. You could also ask an expert organization such as ELG to come in and do an initial assessment or observation

You might want to research potential future paths for the child ahead of time, but view this more as being able to provide options as opposed to dictating what the family should do. Also collect printed information beforehand, as the parents will need a chance to reflect after the meeting, and any materials you give them will help. At ELG we have a selection of information and hand-outs available, which include potential courses of treatment.

On the day of the meeting you need to think carefully about the venue. It should be somewhere quiet where you will not be disturbed, as well as a place in which the parents will feel comfortable. If you suspect that they will be upset, bring tissues and try to set boundaries. One hour should be enough time. If you are worried about violence, place yourself closest to the door. You could also instruct a colleague to come and check on you halfway through.

It is vital that this meeting is just between yourself and the parents; the child should not participate. This conversation may be emotional and difficult, and you want to shield the child from this.

**The most important thing is to not diagnose or name the condition yourself. Diagnosis of special needs takes hours of standardized assessment in multiple settings by a professional, and every child is different.**

**The Meeting**  
The most important thing is to not diagnose or name the condition yourself. Diagnosis of special needs takes hours of standardized assessment in multiple settings by a professional, and every child is different. You are not here to judge or label the child. Even if you are certain you know the specific problem, do not mention it. You should merely state the facts, that you are concerned about a certain aspect of a child's development. Phrases such as "your child has ADHD" can only be responded to with yes or no, and you are here to have a conversation, not an argument. Avoid negative statements, such as "your child is struggling with reading." Instead, emphasise that you are concerned about the child. You are on the same team as the parents and you all want the same thing: for the child to grow into a successful and happy adult.

Be sensitive. In the United States, special needs are often managed within the school system, and the parents may not be used to the idea of getting help from outside the school. Other countries have less of a heritage of dealing with these problems, and you may need to educate the parents about the subject. Some people may be more abrupt and want to come to the point; others will need to build up to it slowly after a more general chat. There is no one right way of doing this, and the more you can empathise with the parents the more successful this meeting will be.

Be careful about the language that you use. Try to avoid specific reference to therapy, it carries connotations and may upset the parents. Instead talk about supporting the child. Do not talk about curing, but instead about helping and coping.

You need to not only explain the current problem, but also why this will be an issue in the future. While a lisp may be unimportant at a young age, it can lead to insecurity in teenage years. Small language acquisition problems in kindergarten can prevent the child from accessing other subjects later. This will help the parents to understand why support is important, and why earlier intervention is beneficial.

**Responses**  
There are a number of ways that parents may respond. Here are some of the more common:

**Relief**  
There may be a real outlet of pressure, as the parents are finally able to talk about the problem. Console and support, and be prepared for very quick follow-up questions and requests for information.

**Denial**  
Parents may not have been aware that there was a problem, or may not want to recognize that there is one. Take your time; you do not want to force anything. Use your collected data to show patterns throughout the child's development, and any outside analyses will be very useful here. Be prepared to end the meeting without any breakthrough; this is a big change and many parents will need time.

**Incomprehension**  
This can be a real issue, especially if you are communicating in a second language. Any printed information can be a real asset. Here at ELG we have professionals fluent in over 20 languages, and we often find that by simply switching language, problems of incomprehension are quickly resolved.

**Anger**  
Reiterate that you are not accusing anyone and that you want the same things as the parents. Be prepared for being blamed; the curriculum, the school, or even you personally may come under attack. Show through your collected evidence that this is not just your opinion. Avoid confrontation at all costs; you need to be on the same team as the parents. It is much better to walk away and reschedule than to damage this partnership.

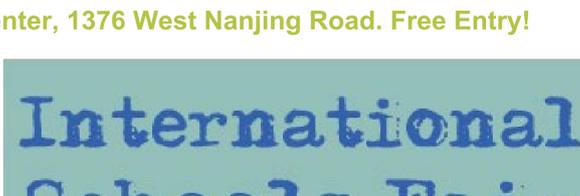
**Concluding the Meeting**  
This meeting is not designed to solve everything, merely be the start of a dialogue between yourself and the parents. The most important thing is to agree on a plan and follow-up appointment. If you think the parents are ready, you can start to plan out further actions, such as initial assessments. Always give the parents the space and time they need, and let them know you are all in this together.

## Upcoming Event

**Saturday 8 November 2014 10:00AM - 4:00PM**

**ELG will be participating in Little Star's International Schools Fair. Come say hi!**

**Location: Atrium Shanghai Center, 1376 West Nanjing Road. Free Entry!**



Connect with us on Facebook [facebook](#) and Linked in [Linked in](#).

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