

BEFORE THE PAPERWORK:

A Parent's Guide

TO INTRODUCING YOUR CHILD TO THEIR TEACHERS

A practical guide for helping educators
meet your child before they meet the
diagnosis.

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Why Write a Letter to Your Child's Teacher?

Every school year begins with a stack of paperwork.

Emergency contacts.	Medical forms.
Schedules.	Accommodations.
IEPs.	504 Plans.

All of these documents are important, but none of them truly introduce your child. They explain diagnoses. They outline supports. They describe needs. What they often don't capture is the person behind the paperwork.

Your child is so much more than a list of accommodations. They're the kid who tells terrible jokes until everyone laughs. The one who loves science, animals, art, trains, or video games. The one who works twice as hard to do things that seem effortless for everyone else. The one who wants what every other child wants - to be understood, accepted, and given the chance to succeed.

That's where a parent letter can make a difference. It isn't meant to replace an IEP or a 504 Plan. It isn't another document filled with educational jargon or legal language.

Instead, it's an opportunity to introduce your child as a whole person before the first day of school - or as early in the school year as possible.

It helps answer questions that paperwork never can.

- What motivates your child?
- What does frustration look like?
- What helps them feel successful?
- What do you hope their teacher understands?
- What have you learned that could make the year just a little easier?

Most importantly, it helps begin a relationship. Some teachers will read your letter and immediately recognize pieces of your child in their classroom. Others may simply gain a new perspective they didn't have before.

Will one letter solve every challenge your child faces? Probably not. But it can create something every successful school year is built on: **understanding**.

When teachers understand your child, they're better equipped to recognize strengths, respond to challenges with empathy, and build the kind of partnership that helps students thrive.

That's the purpose of this guide. Not to help you write the perfect letter.

But to help you tell your child's story in a way that invites understanding, opens the door to partnership, and reminds everyone involved that your child is so much more than the paperwork that follows them.

Before We Begin

If you're reading this, there's a good chance another school year is about to begin.

Maybe you've already bought the school supplies.

Maybe you've checked the class schedule three times.

Maybe you've refreshed the parent portal hoping teacher assignments would be posted a little early.

Or maybe you're simply trying to convince yourself that this year will be different.

If you're anything like I was, you've probably spent years becoming an expert at carrying worries no one else can see.

You smile at back-to-school events.

You tell people everything is going well.

You celebrate the first day pictures.

And underneath it all, your mind is asking questions that most parents never have to ask.

Will my child be understood?

Will their teacher see their strengths before their struggles?

Will I get another phone call?

Will I spend another year explaining the same things to new people?

Will they think I'm "that parent?"

Most people don't see those questions.

And after a while, many of us stop saying them out loud.

We wear our own masks.

We tell ourselves we'll figure it out.

We keep advocating.

We keep smiling.

We keep showing up.

Because that's what parents do.

But I want you to hear something before you turn another page.

I see you.

I see the parent who lies awake the night before school starts, wondering what this year will bring.

I see the parent whose heart races every time the school phone number appears on their screen.

I see the parent who has walked into IEP meetings carrying a notebook full of research while quietly wondering if anyone else in the room truly knows their child.

I see the parent who has questioned whether they're advocating too much... or not enough.

I see the parent who is exhausted from explaining that their child isn't lazy, disrespectful, unmotivated, or "not trying."

Most of all...

I see the parent who loves their child so fiercely that they would do absolutely anything to help them succeed.

Because I've been that parent too.

For thirteen years, our family learned through trial and error, difficult conversations, incredible teachers, heartbreaking moments, and unexpected victories.

This guide isn't built from theory.
It isn't built from perfect answers.
It's built from lived experience.

The pages that follow aren't meant to tell you exactly what to say. No template can do that. Your child is wonderfully unique, and their story deserves to be told in your own words.

Instead, I hope this guide gives you something even more valuable.

A place to begin.
A little more confidence.
And the reassurance that you don't have to figure it all out alone.

If this guide helps one more child be seen...
One more teacher begin a conversation...
Or one more parent feel just a little less alone...

Then sharing our family's story will have been worth it.

Let's begin.

Before You Start Writing

Before you begin writing your letter, I want you to do one thing.

Don't think about the diagnosis.

Don't think about the accommodations.

Don't think about the IEP meeting, the 504 plan, or the paperwork sitting on your kitchen table.

Think about your child.

The real one.

The one who laughs so hard they can't catch their breath.

The one who gets completely lost in their favorite hobby.

The one who has ideas that surprise you.

The one who has worked harder than most people will ever realize just to get through an ordinary school day.

That's the child your teachers need to meet first.

The purpose of this letter isn't to explain a diagnosis. It's to introduce a person.

As you begin writing, remember that your child's teacher is meeting them for the very first time.

You have years of memories, experiences, victories, frustrations, and lessons learned.

Your teacher has a name on a class roster.

This letter helps bridge that gap.

Questions to Reflect On

You don't have to answer every question.

You don't even have to answer them in order.

Use them simply as prompts to help you remember the child you know so well.

Who is your child outside of school?

- What makes them smile?
- What are they passionate about?
- What could they spend hours doing without anyone reminding them?
- What are they most proud of?

What are your child's greatest strengths?

Think beyond grades.

- Are they creative?
- Curious?
- Compassionate?
- Funny?
- Determined?
- A natural problem solver?
- An incredible friend?
- Mechanically minded?
- Artistic?
- Deeply empathetic?

Teachers need to know these things.

What does success look like for your child?

- How do you know they're having a good day?
- What helps them feel confident?
- When do they do their best work?
- What environments help them thrive?

What does overwhelm look like?

Every child communicates stress differently.

- Some become quiet.
- Some become frustrated.
- Some shut down completely.
- Some become silly or distracted.
- Some work twice as hard just to appear like everything is okay.

Helping a teacher recognize those signs early can make an enormous difference.

What actually helps?

After years of trial and error, you've probably discovered strategies that work.

Think about:

- Routines
- Visual reminders
- Movement breaks
- Extra processing time
- Breaking large assignments into smaller steps
- Written instructions
- Quiet spaces
- Positive encouragement
- Opportunities to ask questions privately

Don't worry about using educational language.

Simply describe what you've seen work.

What do you wish teachers understood?

If you could have one honest conversation before the school year begins, what would you want them to know?

Sometimes the most powerful sentence in a letter isn't about accommodations.

Sometimes it's simply, *"Please know that my child is trying."*

Or *"What looks like defiance is often overwhelm."*

Or *"Please don't mistake anxiety for a lack of ability."*

Finally...

Remember that this letter isn't about convincing someone your child deserves support.

It's about helping another person know the incredible child you've had the privilege of loving all these years.

That's a very different letter.

And I think it's a much more powerful one.

Build Your Letter

By now, you've probably realized something.

This isn't really about writing a letter.
It's about beginning a relationship.

Long before your child's teacher knows whether they struggle with reading, lose homework, need extra processing time, or benefit from accommodations, they're going to meet a person.

Your letter gives you the opportunity to shape that first introduction.

Not by pretending your child's challenges don't exist.
But by making sure those challenges aren't the first - or only - thing a teacher learns about them.

Over the years, I learned that the most effective letters didn't try to explain everything.

They simply helped teachers understand enough to begin the school year with empathy, curiosity, and a clearer picture of the child walking into their classroom.

There isn't one perfect teacher letter.

Every child is different.
Every family is different.

Your letter should sound like you.

The words you choose will be different than mine, and that's exactly how it should be.

This guide isn't here to give you a script.
It's here to give you a framework.

A Note About Length

One of the questions I get asked most often is, "*How long should my letter be?*"

In my experience, one to two pages is the sweet spot.

Remember, your child's teacher is preparing for dozens, sometimes more than a hundred, students at the beginning of the school year. Your goal isn't to tell them everything about your child. It's to introduce them to the most important parts of who your child is, how they learn, and how you can work together.

Keep your letter focused on what will help your teacher understand your child from day one. If you find yourself writing more than two pages, ask yourself:

"Does this help my teacher know my child better, or is this a story I can save for a future conversation?"

Your letter doesn't need to say everything.
It simply needs to begin the relationship.

As you build your letter, remember these guiding principles.

1. Start with Your Child, Not the Diagnosis

When teachers begin reading your letter, invite them to meet your child first.

Tell them who your child is.
What makes them laugh?
What are they passionate about?
What makes them light up?
What are they proud of?

When we lead with strengths, we remind teachers that they're meeting a whole person - not a diagnosis, not an IEP, and not a list of accommodations.

Your child's learning differences are part of their story.
They are never the entire story.

2. Help Teachers Understand, Not Just Know

It's easy to write a list of diagnoses.

It's much harder, and much more valuable, to explain what those diagnoses look like in everyday life.

Instead of simply listing ADHD, describe what helps your child stay engaged.

Instead of writing that your child has dysgraphia, explain what writing assignments feel like for them.

Instead of saying your child has anxiety, describe what overwhelm looks like and how teachers might recognize it before it becomes a crisis.

Remember...

Teachers don't just need information.
They need understanding.

The more you can connect a diagnosis to your child's real-life experiences, the easier it becomes for teachers to recognize those moments in the classroom.

3. Focus on Partnership

One of the biggest lessons I learned over the years was that teachers and parents usually want the same thing.

They want children to succeed.

Your letter should reflect that shared goal.

Instead of feeling like a list of expectations, let it become the beginning of a partnership.

Share what you've learned.

Offer ideas that have helped.

Let teachers know you're available to support them just as much as you're asking them to support your child.

Some of the most meaningful relationships we built over the years began with that simple spirit of working together.

The goal isn't to tell teachers how to do their jobs.

It's to share the insights you've gained from knowing your child better than anyone else ever could.

4. Leave Room for Hope

Every family reading this guide has experienced challenges.

Some have experienced heartbreak.

Some have experienced incredible victories.

Most have experienced both.

Your teacher letter doesn't need to hide those struggles.

But it also shouldn't leave a teacher feeling overwhelmed before the school year even begins.

End your letter with hope.

Let them know you believe this can be a great year.

Because sometimes one teacher who truly sees your child can change everything.

Helping Teachers Understand

One lesson took me years to learn.

I couldn't assume that everyone reading Gabe's letter understood what his diagnoses actually meant.

Most people have heard of ADHD.

Many people have at least a basic understanding of autism or dyslexia.

But diagnoses like dysgraphia, dyscalculia, apraxia, executive functioning challenges, or sensory processing differences are often much less familiar. Even when someone recognizes the name, they may not understand what it actually looks like in a classroom.

That's okay.

Teachers aren't expected to know everything.

Just like parents, they're learning too.

One of the simplest things I began doing was helping teachers understand what Gabe's diagnoses looked like in his everyday life.

Instead of simply writing, "Gabe has dysgraphia," I explained that taking notes was incredibly difficult because by the time he finished writing one sentence, the class had already moved on to the next three ideas.

Instead of saying he had sensory challenges, I described what happened when a classroom became loud and overwhelming, and the strategies that helped him regulate before reaching his breaking point.

Those real-life examples helped teachers connect the diagnosis to the child sitting in front of them.

Sometimes, though, words alone weren't enough.

Over the years, I also began including links to trusted resources throughout my letter whenever I introduced a diagnosis that teachers might not be familiar with.

Not because I expected every teacher to read them.

But because I wanted to make it easy for the teachers who genuinely wanted to learn more.

There Isn't Just One Way to Do This

Some parents prefer to weave resources naturally into their child's story, introducing a diagnosis and then providing a trusted link where teachers can learn more if they're interested.

Others prefer to keep the letter focused on their child and include a short list of recommended resources at the end.

Both approaches are perfectly appropriate.

Choose the style that feels most natural to you.

The goal isn't to give teachers homework.

It's simply to remove barriers for the educators who are curious and want to better understand your child.

Choosing Helpful Resources

If you decide to include resources, keep them simple and trustworthy.

Look for organizations and institutions that educators are likely to recognize, such as:

- National nonprofit organizations dedicated to your child's diagnosis or learning difference.
- Children's hospitals and major medical centers.
- Universities or educational organizations with parent-friendly information.
- Government education resources.
- Well-respected advocacy organizations.

Whenever possible, choose resources written in plain language rather than lengthy research papers or highly technical medical information.

Remember, you're not trying to make someone an expert overnight. You're simply offering a place to begin.

The Most Important Thing to Remember

A diagnosis explains part of your child's story.

It is never the whole story.

That's why your letter begins with your child.

The resources are simply there for the teachers who want to keep learning after they've already met the incredible person behind the diagnosis.

When you help teachers understand, you're not asking them to become specialists.

You're inviting them to become partners.

And sometimes, that invitation is where the most meaningful relationships begin.

Introducing My Child

Why This Matters

This is the first impression your child's teacher will have before they ever step into the classroom.

Before they learn about diagnoses, accommodations, or challenges, give them the opportunity to meet the incredible child who will soon be walking through their classroom door.

Help them see your child first.

Everything else in your letter will make more sense because of it.

Here is an example:

You don't have to use these exact words. They're simply here to help you get started.

I'd like to take a few moments to introduce you to my child, _____.

Before we talk about how they learn or the supports that help them succeed, I'd love for you to know a little about who they are.

If you asked the people who know them best to describe them, they'd probably tell you they are _____.

They love _____.

One of the things I admire most about them is _____.

My hope is that, as you get to know them this year, you'll have the opportunity to see these qualities too.

How My Child Learns

Why This Matters

Every child learns differently.

Your child's diagnoses may help explain why they learn the way they do, but what teachers need most is an understanding of what learning actually looks like in your child's everyday school experience.

This is your opportunity to bridge the gap between a diagnosis and a classroom.

Think about what helps your child understand new information.

What makes learning easier?

What situations create frustration or overwhelm?

What do teachers often misunderstand?

Remember, your goal isn't to explain every detail of a diagnosis.

It's to help your teacher recognize your child's learning style, understand the challenges they may face, and see the strengths they bring into the classroom.

The more you can connect diagnoses to real-life experiences, the easier it becomes for teachers to recognize those moments and respond with understanding instead of confusion.

Here is an example:

You don't have to use these exact words. They're simply here to help you get started. Your child's learning journey is unique, and your letter should reflect that.

Every child learns differently, and I'd love to share a little about what learning looks like for my child.

_____ learns best when _____.

One thing we've learned over the years is that _____.

Sometimes what looks like _____ is actually _____.

We've found that _____ helps them do their very best.

Like many neurodivergent children, there are times when what you see on the outside doesn't always match what's happening on the inside. My hope is that by sharing these insights, you'll have a better understanding of how my child learns and how we can work together to help them succeed.

What We've Learned Along the Way

Why This Matters

By the time you reach this part of your letter, your teacher has already met your child and has a better understanding of how they learn.

Now it's time to share what you've discovered through years of experience.

No one knows your child better than you do.
You've seen what helps them thrive.
You've also seen what makes learning more difficult.

This isn't about creating a list of demands or expecting every strategy to be possible in every classroom.

It's about sharing the practical insights you've gained so your child's teacher doesn't have to start from scratch.

Sometimes the smallest adjustments make the biggest difference.

Whether it's providing written directions after verbal instructions, allowing extra processing time before expecting an answer, using a fidget during a lesson, breaking larger assignments into smaller steps, or simply recognizing when your child is becoming overwhelmed, these small moments of understanding can completely change a child's school experience.

Here is an example:

Use, adapt, or completely rewrite these examples so they sound like you. Every child is different, and what works for one may not work for another.

Over the years, we've learned a great deal about what helps my child be successful in school.

Some of the strategies that have made the biggest difference include:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

We've also learned that when _____, my child is much more likely to feel successful, engaged, and confident.

If something doesn't seem to be working, I truly welcome the opportunity to talk together. Every school year teaches us something new, and I value working as a team to figure out what helps my child do their very best.

Partnering Together

Why This Matters

One of the greatest lessons I learned over the years is that the best school years weren't the ones where everyone had all the answers from the very beginning.

They were the years when we worked together.

As parents, we bring years of experience knowing our children.
Teachers bring years of experience helping students learn and grow.

When those two perspectives come together with trust, communication, and a shared goal, incredible things can happen.

Your letter is an invitation to begin that partnership.

Let your child's teacher know that you're available to answer questions, celebrate successes, solve problems, and work together when challenges arise.

No one expects a perfect school year.
But open communication can prevent small concerns from becoming much bigger ones.

Here is an Example:

Use, adapt, or completely rewrite this so it sounds like you and reflects the kind of partnership you hope to build.

Please know that I see us as partners in helping my child have a successful school year.

No one knows my child the way I do, and no one knows your classroom the way you do. I truly believe that when we work together, we give my child the best opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed.

If you notice something isn't working, or if you have questions, concerns, or ideas, I hope you'll reach out. Likewise, if I notice something at home that I think would be helpful for you to know, I'll be sure to share it with you.

Thank you for everything you do for your students. I know the beginning of the school year is busy, and I truly appreciate you taking the time to get to know my child before they walk through your classroom door.

I look forward to working together this year.

Before You Hit Send

Take a deep breath.

You've just done something incredibly meaningful.

You didn't write a list of accommodations.

You didn't write a medical report.

You introduced someone you love.

Before you send your letter, read it one more time.

Not to look for perfect grammar.

Not to make sure every sentence sounds polished.

Read it as though you were your child's teacher.

Then ask yourself...

- Does this letter help someone meet my child before they meet the paperwork?
- Have I shared my child's strengths before describing their challenges?
- Have I explained what learning looks like instead of simply listing diagnoses?
- Have I shared what we've learned in a way that feels helpful rather than overwhelming?
- Does my letter invite partnership?

Most importantly...

If someone had never met my child before today,

Would they finish this letter feeling like they know them a little better?

If the answer is yes...

Your letter is ready.

It doesn't have to be perfect.

It doesn't have to say everything.

It simply has to help another person begin to understand your child.

And that's enough.

One Final Thought

The teacher reading your letter may become one of the most important people in your child's life this year.

They may be the one who notices a strength no one else has seen.

The one who catches a struggle before it becomes a crisis.

The one who helps your child believe in themselves again.

Or the one who simply says, "I understand."

You can't control what kind of school year lies ahead.

But by sharing your child's story, you've already taken the first step toward building a relationship rooted in understanding, trust, and hope.

I hope this guide has helped make that first step just a little easier.

With love and understanding,

JILL

Co-Founder, NeuroLocker

An Example From Our Family

If you've made it this far, thank you. I hope this guide has helped you feel a little more confident as you begin writing your own letter.

The pages you've just read are based on everything our family learned over thirteen years of advocating for my son, Gabe.

The letter you're about to read isn't perfect.

It wasn't written by a professional writer.

It wasn't created as a template.

It was simply a letter from one mom trying to help her son's teachers see the incredible child behind the diagnoses.

Over the years, I updated it as Gabe grew, as we learned more about how he learned, and as new diagnoses helped us better understand his experiences. It became a living document that changed as he changed.

I don't share this letter because I think yours should sound like mine.

In fact, I hope it doesn't.

Your child has their own strengths.

Their own challenges.

Their own personality.

Their own story.

My hope is simply that seeing a real example makes it a little easier to find your own words.

Take what helps.

Leave what doesn't.

Most of all...

Tell your child's story.

Because no one can tell it better than you.

Gabriel's Teacher Letter

The following letter was shared with Gabe's teachers during his freshman year of high school. While some details have naturally changed over time (and I have shortened it to be less than 3 pages - LOL), I'm sharing it exactly as it was written because it reflects where our family was in that season of our journey.

Hi, I would like to take a few moments and introduce you to my son, Gabriel (Gabe) Wideman.

On paper, Gabriel is an average student. He has ADHD and Dyslexia and he is on the Autism Spectrum. In the past, this is where many have stopped looking at Gabriel. But Gabriel is so much more, and I would like to share that with you.

Gabe is exceedingly intelligent. His IQ is very high and because of this he has masked many of his learning differences.

Gabe has struggled in school since the very beginning. He was always in trouble because he was fidgeting, talking, moving around, etc. He has very big emotions and he walks to the beat of his own drum, this led to being picked on a LOT in school.

We had Gabe labeled as having ADHD in the first grade so that we could get support through the school system. We added medication into the mix in the 3rd grade after exhausting all other avenues. We made it through elementary school, but there was a lot of effort put in on the home front to get school assignments understood and completed. This behind-the-scenes work paid off in Gabe's education, but also helped to mask his struggles at school.

When Gabe went to middle school, his younger sister was going into 1st grade. She was identified as needing to be screened for dyslexia. We had the screening done for her and she was diagnosed with dyslexia along with some other learning differences. As a parent who only understood dyslexia to be swapping letters or writing things backwards, I began to educate myself on all the aspects of dyslexia. The funny thing about dyslexia is that it is not the same for everyone. The more I learned, the more I began to suspect that Gabe might also have dyslexia, so we requested testing for Gabe, and he was diagnosed in 6th grade with dyslexia.

Gabe can read pretty well, but his reading comprehension is average. On the other hand, his listening comprehension is close to 90%. So, if he is sitting in class fidgeting with a toy while you are lecturing, he is guaranteed to be taking in more information than if he was reading it himself. Gabe also has [dysgraphia](#) and [dyscalculia](#) – neither diagnosed through the school testing, but confirmed by independent testing we had done.

Gabe's dyslexia and dysgraphia have a huge impact on his ability to take notes. Can he do it, yes. Are they good, useful, or effective notes? No. It takes Gabe so long to write a sentence down that by the time he has, the person lecturing is at least 3 thoughts ahead and Gabe is completely lost. He will not ask you to slow down, he will not ask you to go back. He has been made fun of so many times that he will just sit there and draw or play with a toy and accept the fact that he just won't get the information he needs to be successful.

Gabe's dyscalculia makes math extremely difficult. There are a lot of steps, and the number/letter expressions do not make sense to him. He tends to swap numbers and misses steps as he goes through the process to solve equations.

Gabe struggles to make and keep friends. He walks the beat of his own drum. He can be obsessive with the things that interest him, and he doesn't realize that others are not as engaged or interested. He misses social cues all the time. This has been a big issue and led to quite a bit of bullying. Gabe doesn't see the world the way others do. In his 7th grade year, we had Gabe screened for Autism and we were told that we just weren't properly managing his ADHD and that he was of average intelligence at best. While I disagreed completely, I didn't know what to do... and then Covid hit. We continued to have issues, many things came to light with Covid, and we decided to have him screened by a different doctor, this time by a neuropsychologist.

Gabe is on the spectrum. He is very high functioning, but he is on the spectrum. He also has an IQ in the Superior range. He is very mechanically inclined, and he is very musical (He plays acoustic, electric, and bass guitar, keyboard, alto and tenor saxophone. He taught himself to play the bass guitar and the keyboard, and he is teaching himself to play the Viola. He also will be learning the baritone saxophone this year).

I am not telling you these things so that you will feel sorry for him, and I am not telling you these things to brag. I am telling you these things because I want you to SEE Gabriel. I don't want you to look at him and see a kid who is causing problems, not paying attention, picking fights, or too stupid to be in your class (all things that both he and I have been told multiple times by teachers throughout his school career). I want you to see Gabe, a child who is so smart, but sees the world differently from you and me. A child who is fighting just to get through school each and every day.

Gabe takes medication for his ADHD – he is at the highest dosages he can take and has maxed out several different medications – and it still wears off by halfway through the school day. This leaves Gabe feeling like someone who has crashed from a sugar and caffeine high, and then he still has to make it through the rest of the school day. We tried adding medicine to get him through the end of the day and it led to severe tics. Gabe also has sensory issues. When the classrooms get too loud and rowdy, he struggles to focus and not get agitated. Not all noises affect him the same way – music is relaxing versus a sensory trigger. He has sensory toys (fidgets, Gunpla, and stuffed animals with different textures) that he uses to calm himself and keep from flipping out. He uses headphones and music as well as sound canceling headphones to keep the sounds at a manageable volume. Gabe has big emotions ([emotional dysregulation](#)). When he reaches his limit, he cannot get himself under control – he needs someone to pull him aside, in a quiet place, and tell him to breathe (REALLY, he needs to be told to take deep breaths so that he can calm down). And when he is really anxious or at his limits, his tics become very noticeable. When he is focused and in his zone, you may never even see the tics.

Gabe wants to do well. He wants to please you, and he desperately wants to fit in and knows that he doesn't. He has been bullied throughout his entire school career – from both students and teachers – because he is different. If you can just take the time to SEE him and if you are willing to accept him and work with him, he will go to great lengths to work hard for you. He doesn't communicate well through written words, but if you ask him questions, he can give you very detailed responses. His verbal communication is excellent and with the right questions he can show you how much he has learned.

Please know that I am a very active parent and a strong advocate for my child. I know how smart Gabe is and I know what he is capable of. I do, and will continue, to push him hard from our end. I will do whatever it takes to make him successful in the classroom. I will bend over backwards to support you as you work with my son.

I am asking for your willingness to work with Gabe and to communicate with me. Gabe doesn't have the executive functions (yet, we are working on it) to get notes home to me, give me updates on big assignments, or to break down big assignments into small pieces. I know that he is in high school, and we all expect our kids to grow up and act like adults, but this is not something that Gabe does well - yet. I need to know if he is not doing his work or turning in assignments so that I can figure out why and how to get back on track (lack of understanding or just not doing it). I need to know when he has big assignments so that we can discuss what it will take to get them done and break it down into manageable pieces. I need you to know that asking Gabe to write an extensive paper in class is probably not going to lead to a well thought out or complete assignment. And asking him to read and comprehend something in a noisy classroom may not get the best results either.

We have tools – he has a Learning Ally account, and many books are available through this that will read to him (think Audible). If we know what books will be used, we will search for them and figure out how to get them in the best format for him (even if we have to read them at home). He has access to tools that will do text to speech and speech to text. Speech to text is really helpful if there is a big writing assignment that needs to be completed in class, and he can't have extra time, because he can speak his thoughts and they are translated as quickly as he has them. They may still need to be organized, but it is better than him trying to write them down the first time.

He won't necessarily ask to use these accommodations, especially if he goes to use them and gets made fun of by students. Please just be aware and let me know if his work is suffering because of this. I will work with him at home, and his sister, Sophea, is a junior this year (2021-22) and attends NFHS – some of you may have had her in your classes. She is there if you or Gabe need her.

Thank you. We are so excited to be coming to Naaman this year. Our experience here with Sophea has been so positive, and the support we have received in the transition period for Gabe has been amazing! Please know that although I will be a strong advocate for Gabe and his needs, I am just as strong of an advocate for you. Gabe's differences are just that, differences, not an excuse for not doing the work. My expectations for him are the same as they are for Sophea – to work hard and to do their very best. The journey to get there is just different for Gabe.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns. I will reach out to each of you the first week or 2 of school as well so that we are able to meet.

Kind regards,
Jill

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