

# Opening the Lines of Communication With the School

After marrying my husband, I adopted his son, Israel, who was seven years old. When I met Israel, I learned of his behavioral and developmental challenges. As his mother, I wanted to educate myself about his disabilities and also needed someone who could assist me with some challenges our family was facing with his school.



I was fortunate in meeting two great people who work for Families Helping Families of Jefferson. One of the advocates was bilingual. Since my son and I did not speak English well it was really useful for me to talk about our challenges in Spanish. Ms. Laura Nata was the first advocate to help my son and family in learning about his disabilities and connected us to a bunch of resources here in New Orleans.

Since January of 2014, it's been a very difficult time for us, especially when Israel started 2nd grade. We kept requesting an evaluation for him through the Jefferson Parish Public School System since, according to his age, he did not know how to speak, read, write, count, etc. It felt like an impossible mission until Ms. Nata, Ms. Shanida Mathieu, and Families Helping Families of Jefferson stepped in to give me support as a mother.

Both ladies spent time teaching me how to understand my special son and what to do, guided me through the process of getting him evaluated, how to understand his IEP evaluation, how IEP accommodations are created and what they look like in the classroom. At one point I did lose trust in the school and felt that they were not listening to me as a parent. I requested an advocate attend an IEP meeting with me and Ms. Mathieu attended and assisted me in opening the lines of communication with the school. This was also a successful learning experience for me and helped me grow as his mother and advocate.

It's been almost three years now and my son is doing wonderfully in all his daily activities. He's been an A/B honor roll student twice in 4th grade. He is in 5th grade now and finally has a one-on-one special education teacher and is improving daily in school.

Thanks to Families Helping Families of Jefferson and all the support they have in place for families like ours.

Aura Amaya