COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS:

How to Cultivate Strong Relationships and Compassionate Communication in the Classroom
Sarehl Lomme, LCPC
Early Childhood Counseling and Consulting

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Bridger Peaks Counseling

Catherine Matthews, M.S.
Bozeman Special Education Preschool

MCEC Conference
Igniting Passion: Succeeding with Every Student
Helena, MT
February 20, 2019
 SUPER POWER BABY PROJECT

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUYBpsujxdw

5.55
COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM

Sarehl Lomme, LCPC
“The toddler’s relationship with the caregiver [teacher] is the single most important component of the child care experience… The relationship with the caregiver becomes an important model of what human connections outside of the family have to offer.”

-Alicia Lieberman, The Emotional Life of the Toddler
We are not the survival of the fittest. We are the survival of the nurtured.

-Louis Cozolino
Still Face Experiment
Dr. Edward Tronick

https://youtu.be/6czxW4R9w2g
ATTACHMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

➤ What is attachment?
➤ Greetings/goodbyes
➤ Attunement
➤ Rupture and repair
➤ Environment
➤ Transitions
➤ Relationships
CONFUSING COMMUNICATION

➤ **cue** - a signal/request (direct or indirect) from the child or caregiver for a specific need to be met.

➤ **miscue** - misleading or contradictory cue used to protect the child (or later adult) from the pain of having a specific need exposed and/or unmet; well synchronized “dance” that allows both child and caregiver access to each other in a way that currently feels “comfortable” (comfort in the service of defense).

Circle of Security® and attachment theory
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CUES</strong></th>
<th><strong>MISCUES</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➤ crying</td>
<td>➤ crying for a long time or crying loudly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ eye contact</td>
<td>➤ not crying at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ smiling</td>
<td>➤ looking away/turning away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ giggling/laughing</td>
<td>➤ laughing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ pointing</td>
<td>➤ hitting, kicking, throwing, spitting, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ arching back</td>
<td>➤ arching back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ reaching/pointing</td>
<td>➤ moving away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ clenched fists</td>
<td>➤ yelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ clenched teeth</td>
<td>➤ shutting down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ red face</td>
<td>➤ pulling away from adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ stomping feet</td>
<td>➤ pushing adult away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ looking away</td>
<td>➤ hitting/harming self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ sweating</td>
<td>➤ controlling behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ head down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT DOES THE CHILD WANT?

➤ Function of Behavior
  ➤ escape/avoidance
  ➤ attention-seeking
  ➤ sensory stimulation
  ➤ access to tangibles/activities

➤ Social and Emotional Needs
  ➤ to feel safe and secure
  ➤ to feel worthy and loved
  ➤ to feel acknowledged and understood
  ➤ to feel noticed and receive attention (connection)
  ➤ to feel a sense of predictability
  ➤ to understand and be able to manage my upset feelings
  ➤ to feel a sense of control
  ➤ to feel safe and stimulated in my exploration
  ➤ to feel competent
  ➤ to have mutually enjoyable relationships and feel a sense of belonging

Promoting First Relationships and attachment theory

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)
WHAT MIGHT THE CHILD BE EXPERIENCING?

➤ Am I loved, safe, secure, seen, heard, good enough?
➤ Will you still be there if I act out or withdraw?
➤ I’m not able to handle my big feelings on my own right now.
➤ I’m experiencing a trauma trigger and don’t know what it is in my body or memory.
➤ I don’t understand what I’m supposed to do or say.
➤ I’m hungry/tired/sick.
➤ I’m overstimulated/overwhelmed.
➤ I’m afraid.
➤ I need space.
➤ I want someone to play with me.
➤ It hurts me when you say that to me.
➤ I don’t like when you treat me like this.
➤ I need help!
➤ I’m bad (shame).
➤ I have no idea what’s going on in my brain, body, and nervous system!
Hand Model of the Brain
Dr. Dan Siegel

What happens when we (adults and children) “flip our lids?”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw
What happened to the child?

(instead of, “What’s wrong with the child?”)
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)

**ABUSE**
- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual

**NEGLECT**
- Physical
- Emotional

**HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION**
- Mental Illness
- Incarcerated Relative
- Mother treated violently
- Substance Abuse
- Divorce
A child’s behavior is not always what it seems...

- skill level
- chronic and/or toxic stress
- brain development
- fear
- health issues
- basic needs not met
- attachment insecurities
- developmental stage
- sleep issues
- temperament
- lack of physical safety
- trauma triggers
- learning style
- dysregulated nervous system
- sensory needs
- lack of nutrition
- unexpressed feelings and experiences
- stressful pregnancy and/or birth
- genes and epigenetics

Sarehl Lomme, LCPC
What lies beneath behavior?

Underlying basic human need?

Developmental stage?

Current state of the nervous system?


Coping strategy that no longer works?

Structural changes in the brain?

How is this “problem” the child’s solution?

Trauma-induced thinking & conditioning?

https://www.echotraining.org/resources/
HOW DO WE CULTIVATE COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION IN THE CLASSROOM?

“The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers.”

-Thich Nhat Hanh
➤ **Playfulness** - “Creating an atmosphere of lightness and interest when you communicate...learning how to use a light tone with your voice, like you might use when story telling, rather than an irritated or lecturing tone. It’s about having fun, and expressing a sense of joy.”

➤ **Acceptance** - “Unconditional acceptance is at the core of the child’s sense of safety.” Accept the feeling, not the behavior.

➤ **Curiosity** - “Without judgment, how we help children become aware of their inner life, reflect upon the reasons for their behavior, and then communicate it... Curiosity is **wondering** about the meaning behind the behavior for the child. Curiosity lets the child know that the adults **understand**.”

➤ **Empathy** - The capacity to think with and feel with the experience of another. “The adult actively shows the child that the child’s inner life is important to the adult and he/she wants to be with the child in her hard times.”

Dan Hughes - Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy  
https://ddpnetwork.org/about-ddp/meant-pace/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Comment</th>
<th>Reframed Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He’s just looking for attention.</td>
<td>He needs connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She’s being manipulative.</td>
<td>She has learned this as a survival skill or to get her needs met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He’s giving me a hard time.</td>
<td>He’s having a hard time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She’s pushing my buttons.</td>
<td>She’s cuing - or miscuing - me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop interrupting me.</td>
<td>You really want to tell me something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re not listening.</td>
<td>How can I connect more deeply with you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you don’t come with me now, I’ll leave without you.</td>
<td>I want to keep you safe and will hold your hand while we leave.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Three R’s: Reaching The Learning Brain

Dr Bruce Perry, a pioneering neuroscientist in the field of trauma, has shown us that to help a vulnerable child to learn, think and reflect, we need to intervene in a simple sequence.

First: We must help the child to regulate and calm their fight/flight/freeze responses.

Second: We must relate and connect with the child through an attuned and sensitive relationship.

Third: We can support the child to reflect, learn, remember, articulate and become self-assured.

Heading straight for the ‘reasoning’ part of the brain with an expectation of learning, will not work so well if the child is dysregulated and disconnected from others.
COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTION
DURING CONFLICT - LET’S REFLECT

1. Pause.
2. What am I feeling?
   (Frustrated, judged, confused, helpless, embarrassed, overwhelmed, angry, guilty, ashamed, exhausted…)
3. Where am I in my window of tolerance?
   (Introduced in Rachael’s presentation.)
4. What do I need before I respond to the child?
   (Deep breaths, time out for myself, ask for help…)
5. What is the child feeling?
   (Remember - accept the feeling, not the behavior.)
6. What is the child trying to communicate through behavior?
   What is he/she trying to tell me?
7. What social and emotional need(s) is the child expressing?
   (To feel a sense of safety, security, love, trust, competence, predictability, belonging, control…)
8. Now….how do I want to respond?
9. How can I reconnect with the child and help him/her move forward?
10. Return to the original direction/instruction (when child is calm).
11. Anything else to repair (when the time is right)?

★ It’s a practice! ★

Inspired by Promoting First Relationships, Circle of Security, attachment theory, mindfulness, Levine, Ogden, & Siegel
Every day at lunch a four year old picks food up off the floor and eats whatever he finds. When he hears your voice telling him (for the millionth time 😞) not to eat anything off the floor, he shoves the food in his mouth so quickly, before you can get to him.

➤ What does the behavior look like on the surface?
   ➤ “He’s doing it for attention. When I look at him, he shoves the food in his mouth, and he knows he’s not supposed to do that. He’s pushing my buttons.”
   ➤ “He’s just trying to get out of eating what’s in his lunch box. He never wants to sit at lunch.”

➤ What could be another explanation?
   ➤ Deprivation/neglect - the child lacks a sense of safety, stability, security, trust, control, predictability.

➤ How would you respond to each?
DOs AND DON’Ts OF A TRAUMA-INFORMED COMPASSIONATE CLASSROOM

CREATE A SAFE SPACE
Consider not only physical safety but the children’s emotional safety as well.

ESTABLISH PREDICTABILITY
Write out a schedule and prepare children for transitions. It helps create a sense of security and safety.

BUILD A SENSE OF TRUST
Follow through with your promises and in situations where changes are unavoidable be transparent with your explanations.

OFFER CHOICES
Empower students and offer "power with" rather than "power over" strategies.

STAY REGULATED
Help your students (and yourself!) stay in the "Resiliency Zone" to promote optimum learning. Have regulation tools ready to help students bumped out of the zone into either hyperarousal (angry, nervous, panicky) or hypoarousal (numb, depressed, fatigued).

There's really only one DON'T
Let's not punish kids for behaviors that are trauma symptoms.

https://www.echotraining.org/resources/
“Every child deserves a champion: an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can possibly be.”

- Rita Pierson, Educator

“Every Kid Needs a Champion” - TED Talk
REFERENCES/RESOURCES

➤ Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health (Prenatal through 6) https://www.allianceaimh.org
➤ Beacon House https://beaconhouse.org.uk/useful-resources/
➤ Bessel van der Kolk https://besselvanderkolk.net/index.html
➤ Bruce Perry http://childtrauma.org
➤ The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University https://developingchild.harvard.edu
➤ Child-Parent Psychotherapy http://childparentpsychotherapy.com
➤ Circle of Security https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com
➤ Dan Hughes http://www.danielhughes.org
➤ Dan Siegel https://www.drdansiegel.com
➤ Echo Training https://www.echotraining.org
➤ The National Child Traumatic Stress Network https://www.nctsn.org
➤ Peter Levine https://traumahealing.org
➤ Stephen Porges - Polyvagal Theory https://blog.bulletproof.com/stephen-porges-the-polyvagal-theory-the-vagal-nerve-264/?fbclid=IwAR28iSFMJ1NnQFaCuR1YQHl0BQc02QhjTurqEI65iE1lwTHB3KGtJHpW6Rg
➤ Zero to Three https://www.zerotothree.org
ARTICLES & WEBSITES

- Attachment in the Classroom - Christi Bergin & David Bergin

- Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation https://www.ecmhc.org

- The Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation https://www.samhsa.gov/iecmhc

- Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu

- Childhood Trauma in the Classroom https://www.teachermagazine.com.au/articles/childhood-trauma-in-the-classroom/?fbclid=IwAR3xmc7Q3MPT9YToWAAuvj84DWrHch8mh2RIFw1gs6Xm5jW2RF_V5uvNiEk


- Kindergarteners Talk About Mindfulness in “Just Breathe” Short Film
  https://www.mindful.org/kindergarteners-talk-about-mindfulness-in-just-breathe-short-film/?fbclid=IwAR1YzygK7ix8hBm1hTIUe926iC29VbWDusBQdAaC2UJMwm99EPN54ShYPk

- TEACH through Love Conscious Communication Cards https://www.teach-through-love.com

- The Pyramid Model Consortium http://www.pyramidmodel.org

- Trauma-Informed Classrooms
  https://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/NCJFCJ_SJP_Trauma_Informed_Classrooms_Final.pdf

- Trauma Informed Positive Behavior Support https://www.tipbs.com

- Two studies point to the power of teacher-student relationships to boost learning
  https://hechingerreport.org/two-studies-point-to-the-power-of-teacher-student-relationships-to-boost-learning/?fbclid=IwAR3sdr9RGEPqsFnwDges_8b7qwuantvCtaskgyqNiYkYpc0G7wNj0OV18_vc

- What Is Developmental Trauma? https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/expressive-trauma-integration/201808/what-is-developmental-trauma?fbclid=IwAR2XFDDiHMcw92ePB0avq8qXjLJ-83zGB5sXIleH9aYJla1lghOY1_o

- 30 Reasons Why Free Play Benefits Child Development
  https://www.aaastateofplay.com/30-reasons-why-free-play-benefits-child-development/?fbclid=IwAR0Z0vx4Ny-0YvltincRrVDb5zqtpilpGuK5pWmRx8ebeSzc71z43-0K0
PODCASTS

➤ Attachment Theory in Action
   https://attachmenttheoryinaction.podbean.com

➤ Attuned Communication instead of Classroom Management

➤ CASEL: Leading Advocate for Social Emotional Learning
   https://www.gettingsmart.com/2016/10/casel-leading-advocate-for-social-emotional-learning/

➤ The Center of Excellence for IECMHC
   https://www.samhsa.gov/iecmhc/podcasts-webinars

➤ Circle of Security and Attachment Theory (for parents and teachers)

➤ Social-Emotional Learning and Why It Matters

➤ Trauma Informed Education - Dr. Kay Ayre

➤ The Trauma Therapist
   https://www.thetraumatherapistproject.com/podcasts/
VIDEOS

➤ The ARC - Attachment Aware Schools https://youtu.be/uMbhB2l4ut0
➤ Brainious https://www.brainiousfilm.com
➤ Daring Classrooms - Brene Brown
➤ Every Kid Needs a Champion - Rita Pierson
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFnMTHhKdkw
➤ Hand Model of the Brain - Dan Siegel https://youtu.be/gm9CIJ74Oxw
➤ How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime - Nadine Burke Harris
➤ Paper Tigers https://kpjrfilms.co/paper-tigers/
➤ The Power of Expectations - Invisibilia https://youtu.be/hbhw1RRW_3o
➤ ReMoved https://youtu.be/lOeQUwdAjE0
➤ ReMoved Part 2 Remember My Story https://youtu.be/I1fGmEa6WnY
➤ ReMoved Part 3 Love is Never Wasted https://youtu.be/fegRjSgRYXk
➤ Resilience https://kpjrfilms.co/resilience/
➤ Still Face Experiment - Dr. Ed Tronick - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apzXGEbZht0
➤ Still Face with Dads https://youtu.be/6cpxW4R9w2g
➤ The Window of Tolerance Animation - Beacon House https://youtu.be/Wcm-1FBrDvU
➤ The Wisdom of the Body - Pat Ogden https://youtu.be/9FIwC39eZYo
Bozeman Area Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) https://www.bozemansepta.org
Child Care Connections https://cccmontana.org
ChidWise https://www.childwise.org
Down Syndrome Research and Education Advocacy in Montana (D.R.E.A.M.) http://www.dream-mt.org
Eagle Mount https://eaglemount.org
Elevate Montana http://www.elevatemontana.org
The Montana Institute http://www.montanainstitute.com
Montana Project LAUNCH
  https://dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/childcare/montanaprojectlaunch#506886428-resources
  http://healthinfo.montana.edu/Montana%20Project%20Launch.pdf
The Orchid Club http://orchidclubmt.org
Zero to Five https://www.zerotofive.org
COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS WITH PARENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

Rachael L. Dunkel, LCPC, LAC
Imagine if that tiny little human has a diagnosis of some sort. Autism. Cerebral Palsy. Traumatic Brain Injury. The diagnosis could be physical, emotional or neurological. It could be obvious. Or maybe it’s invisible to the outside world.

Scary right.

You aren’t a doctor. Or a therapist or a physiologist. There is no instruction manual. It’s just you knowing in your gut that something is wrong. It feels like a roller coaster. It feels out of control. And just like parents of typical kids...you have no idea what you are doing. But yet, you are entrusted to raise this tiny little VULNERABLE human.

At first you don’t want to acknowledge it. Then, you don’t want to believe it. And once you get over that hurdle you want to talk about it. You need knowledge. You need to vent. You need a friend. You need people to understand.”

-Kate Swenson Author of Finding Cooper’s Voice
WHAT IMPACTS RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS?
BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

➤ Individualized Education Plan Implementation
➤ Educator Stress
➤ Parental Stress
➤ Deficit Based Language
INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Parent Thoughts and Feelings about IEP Meetings & Implementation

➤ “I feel trapped on an endless defensive, anxiety ridden rollercoaster dealing with the school district!” - W. Stanley
➤ “I HATE the IEP meetings. I feel out numbered & like they think I don’t know my child or what’s best for him.” - J. Gardner
➤ “I cannot stress enough how much the lack of communication affects every single aspect of my son’s life! This starts from the day to day things and goes all the way through finding out at the meeting he isn’t performing.” - J. Mattilia
➤ “I felt out numbered, felt way less knowledgeable, not about my child but how to best help overall.” - K. Watson
➤ “I left feeling overwhelmed and defeated. I understood nothing that was said and felt like I had just signed my son’s life away. I was surrounded by a long table of ‘professionals’ who all had my son’s best interest, yet, I felt horrible. I cried walking out.” - L. Aguirre
➤ “I felt very intimidated and afraid they would take away the support he desperately needs.” - M. Rosander
➤ “I had a school psychologist naturally use the word ‘normal’ once… As in ‘wow, your daughter seems so normal compared to what she shows on paper.” - A. Hicks
➤ “Don’t try to normalize my kid’s disabilities like everyone on the street has autism and it’s no big deal.” - B. Stantum
➤ “I’d like teachers to stand up for themselves. Be honest if you can’t meet my child’s needs. No fluff please.” - N. Marie
➤ “Walking into a meeting I thought it was just going to be me and the classroom teacher and the SLP, only to be faced with an army of educational types.” - B. Pendleton
➤ “I’m embarrassed to say, I got tired of the fight.” - Egerter
➤ “I think they have too much to deal with [teachers]. I’d hate to be a teacher with 20 regular kids and 10 with IEPs a hundred pages long. Parents want them to perform miracles and most have no background in special ed.” - N. Marie
➤ When I’m in IEP meetings I feel ‘nervous, mistrust, overwhelmed, ignored, & out numbered.” - K. Watson
CAUSES OF TEACHER STRESS

- Rise in student demands and expectations
- Increase in workload and administration
- Vulnerability due to accountability
- Can be involved in up to 1000 interpersonal contacts a day

- Expectations of self need for perfectionism
- Lack of social and emotional competence training
- Demanding parents
- Lack of time to meet admin requirements

www.teacher-wellbeing.com.au
WHAT MIGHT THE PARENT BE EXPERIENCING

➤ Confusion
➤ Overwhelm
➤ Isolation
➤ Anxiety/Fear
➤ Shame - the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging - focus on self
➤ Grief - loss, longing and feeling lost
➤ Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
How Trauma Can Affect Your Window of Tolerance

**HYPERAROUSAL**
This is when you feel extremely anxious, angry, or even out of control. Unfamiliar or threatening feelings can overwhelm you, and you might want to fight or run away.

**DYSREGULATION**
This is when you begin to feel agitated. You may feel anxious, revved up, or angry. You don’t feel out of control, but you also don’t feel comfortable.

**WINDOW OF TOLERANCE**
This is where things feel just right, where you are best able to cope with the punches life throws at you. You’re calm but not tired. You’re alert but not anxious.

**DYSREGULATION**
This is when you begin to feel like you’re shutting down. You may feel a little spacy, lose track of time, or start to feel sluggish. You don’t feel out of control, but you also don’t feel comfortable.

**HYPOAROUSAL**
This is when you feel extremely zone out and numb, both emotionally and physically. Time can go missing. It might feel like you’re completely frozen. It’s not something you choose – your body takes over.

Stress and Trauma Can Shrink Your Window of Tolerance.
This means that it may be harder to stay calm and focused. When you’re outside your window of tolerance, you may be more easily thrown off balance.

Your Work with Your Practitioner Can Help to Enlarge Your Window of Tolerance.
They can help you stay calm, focused, and alert even when something happens that would usually throw you off balance.
## How the Body Responds to a Perceived Threat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hyper-arousal</th>
<th>Window of Tolerance</th>
<th>Hypo-arousal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➤ Anxiety</td>
<td>➤ Optimal level of arousal</td>
<td>➤ Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ Outbursts</td>
<td>➤ Comfort zone</td>
<td>➤ Flat affect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ Overwhelm</td>
<td>➤ Ability to regulate emotions</td>
<td>➤ Lethargy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ Obsessive thoughts</td>
<td>➤ Thinking and feeling simultaneously</td>
<td>➤ Deadness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ Impulsivity</td>
<td>➤ Present moment awareness</td>
<td>➤ Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ Hyper-vigilance</td>
<td>➤ Awareness of boundaries</td>
<td>➤ Disabled cognitive processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ Sleeplessness</td>
<td></td>
<td>➤ Can’t say “no”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ Intrusive imagery</td>
<td></td>
<td>➤ Can’t defend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ Defensiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td>➤ Dissociation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ Flight/Fight</td>
<td></td>
<td>➤ Disorientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ Hostility/Rage</td>
<td></td>
<td>➤ Disconnection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DEFICIT BASED LANGUAGE

“The words we have associated with disability reveal a deficit culture that does not accept, encourage, or enable humanity.” - Rachel Callander

- Retarded
- Abnormal
- Dysfunctional
- Disabled
- Weakness
- Intervene
- Resistance
- Punishment
- Behavioral issues
- Non-compliance
- Deviant
- Resistant
HOW DO WE CULTIVATE COURAGEOUS - COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS?
**COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS – LANGUAGE MATRIX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FLUFFY</th>
<th>EMPOWERING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant phrases</td>
<td>Clearly disclosed information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special kids/special parents</td>
<td>Sharing the positives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the good</td>
<td>Encouraging growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Stay strong”</td>
<td>Values discussed</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONFUSING</th>
<th>DESTRUCTIVE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of educational jargon</td>
<td>Speaking only of limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing tools w/o education</td>
<td>Using harmful language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing little/no feedback</td>
<td>Using subtractive words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using of unfamiliar acronyms</td>
<td>Providing feedback w/o support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effective Communication in Healthcare - Rachel Callander
This communication often comes from a place of kindness; this is not how it is perceived by the parent.

➤ Communication feels irrelevant.

➤ Parents experience this as: not being seen or heard, not being acknowledged or valued, being misunderstood.
Parents feel confused and frustrated when they don’t understand what is being presented to them.

Can cause feelings of insecurity or stupidity when he/she does not understand the information presented or the acronyms discussed.
Parents hear harmful language - terms such as “mentally retarded” or “inability to thrive.”

While informative, parents experience feelings of fear, offense, hopelessness, overwhelm, grief and disconnection.
EMPOWERING – POSITIVE INFORMATIVE

➤ Information is shared with clarity, and teacher ensures parent understanding.

➤ Information is shared with compassion.

➤ An expectation of support is nurtured.

➤ Teachers help parents forge meaning.

Effective Communication in Healthcare - Rachel Callander
COURAGEOUS COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY
## HEALTHY - EMPOWERING AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hospitality</th>
<th>Concern for the whole person rather than a collection of challenges. Open investigation of options and agreement on goals is key to effective outcomes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy/Compassion</td>
<td>A teacher’s ability to explain, listen and empathize has a profound impact on student growth and educational outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allies</td>
<td>United, connected, able to collaborate. The sense of being a team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>The words used by teachers can have a significant impact on student success and create motivation and feelings of support between parent and teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Time is limited for parent and teacher. If either feels their time is wasted, it can cause frustration and disconnection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>Empowering communication facilitates the spirit of hospitality and is the foundation of respectful, trusting relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>“The process starts with you,” helps to grow a culture. It requires practice, commitment, and skill building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Power of Empathy

Theresa Wiseman’s Four Attributes of Empathy

1. Being able to see the world as others see it
2. Non-judgmental
3. To understand another person’s feelings
4. To communicate the understanding of another person’s feelings
FOUR PILLARS OF COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

- VULNERABILITY
- CLARITY OF VALUES
- TRUST
- RISING SKILLS/RESILIENCE

-Brené Brown
Juniper's super powers: Juniper has a beautiful spirit. She's determined and finds endless ways to invite attention. She lights up a room with her smile and delights in all things musical.
REFERENCES


EFFECTIVE AND COMPASSIONATE CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Catherine Matthews
Special Education Preschool Teacher-Bozeman, MT
✓ Introduce the Classroom
✓ Introduce Types of Classroom Communication
✓ Discuss the Purpose and "Approximate" Schedule of Communication
✓ Identify Communication and Family Engagement Preferences and Barriers
✓ Create Classroom Community
✓ Incorporate Individual Student Celebrations
Introducing the Team: child, parents, extended family, administration, teachers, support staff, therapists, community support (daycare providers, local organizations, medical professionals, etc.)

➢ Clarify that parents/family are an integral part of the team

➢ Introduce Special Education Paperwork (Evaluation Reports, Individualized Education Programs, Progress Reports, etc.)

➢ Provide Information regarding weekly school schedule (what activities take place on what day)

➢ Introduce families to types of communication used and receive written permission as necessary to allow participation

➢ Inform families of the fact that they can opt out of the activities/events as they so choose (Be aware of each family’s preferences)

➢ Ask for preferences in type/schedule of communication
CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION

➤ **Types of Communication**
➤ Newsletters
➤ Email
➤ Communication Apps (Seesaw, Brightwheel, Remind, etc.)
➤ Text
➤ Phone
➤ In Person Meetings (Conferences, Home Visits, etc.)
➤ Special Education Meetings (Evaluation Reports, IEPs, etc.)
➤ Progress Reports

➤ **When and Why?**
➤ Weekly brief updates of classroom themes/activities, upcoming events, etc. made available in printed form in a designated location and via email/app
➤ Weekly newsletter distribution, community opportunities, school/districtwide updates, team updates and individual updates with parents if preferred
➤ Daily/Weekly password protected, parent approved communication option to share photos, videos, activities, announcements and reminders.
➤ Typically used upon parent request, with written permission and/or in emergency situations and/or need of immediate communication when phone calls are unsuccessful.
➤ Less likely to misunderstood, but can be more difficult in regards to timing & access. Parents may request and identify convenient times for contact. Should be used for issues of safety and other immediate concerns
➤ Most effective form of communication but often difficult to schedule regularly due to work schedules, time., etc. Parent Pick Up and Drop Off
➤ Initial Evaluations and Individualized Education Programs, yearly IEP meetings, Amendments, and/or as requested.
➤ Written progress reports provided on a scheduled basis related directly to progress towards goals and objectives designed for the classroom.
GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

➤ Establish a positive relationship with every parent and get to know the family

➤ Answer all parent or guardian communication in less than 24 hours (unless sick or other unforeseen circumstances)

➤ Be careful with email. Even with your best intentions and efforts, email does not illustrate tone and body language (some of the most important and powerful components of effective communication)

➤ Be mindful when using group emails. They are extremely helpful for sharing information and keeping all team members informed, however, emails can be easily misconstrued.

➤ When safety is a concern, a phone call is always best.

➤ Be cognizant of social media friendships. Be cautious and avoid possible negative, inappropriate or adverse interactions.
“Successful schools not only embrace but also actively solicit the engagement of student families.”

– Debbie Silver in education Week Teacher
WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO PARENT/FAMILY ENGAGEMENT?

➢ Lack of Time
➢ Family Situation (Employment, Finances, Health, etc.)
➢ Past Negative Experience
➢ Cultural or Language Differences
➢ Special Education Law that can be difficult to understand
➢ Lack of training on the part of the educator to effectively facilitate engagement and communication
ALONE WE CAN DO SO LITTLE; TOGETHER
WE CAN DO SO MUCH.
Creating a Classroom/School Family

➤ Schoolwide Awards and Recognition (weekly, every two weeks, monthly or annually)
➤ Participation in Respect Rallies thru Special Olympics Young Athletes Program (Colors of Awareness Bracelets, etc.)
➤ Schoolwide (Staff and Student) Celebrations (Bulletin Boards, Events, etc.)
➤ Classroom Celebrations and Events (Family Music Therapy, Field Trips, Parties, Graduation, etc.)
➤ Classroom/School Family Art Projects (staff and student “All About Me” posters, School Family Trees, etc.)
➤ Classroom Slideshows
➤ Volunteers (Fieldtrip Chaperones, Party Helpers, Craft Assistants, Snack Supplies, etc.)
➤ Create an “Open Door” policy (so that parents feel free to drop in and be a part of their child’s education)
This is what Family Engagement looks like
NONE OF THE TESTS, ASSESSMENTS, RATING SCALES OR PROGRESS REPORTS WILL EVER BE ABLE TO MEASURE JUST HOW AWESOME MY SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD IS OR HOW MUCH JOY, HAPPINESS AND LOVE THEY GIVE AND RECEIVE.

awayfromtheoven.com
Individual Child Celebrations

❖ Awesomeness Reports
❖ Name Poems
❖ Superhero Powers and Capes
❖ Fingerprint Jewelry and artwork
❖ Graduation “Diplomas”
❖ Photo Collages and Photo Gifts
Individual Student Celebration Inspirations
I've Learned... that People will forget what you said, People will forget what you did, but People will never forget how you made them Feel.

~Maya Angelou~

Celebrate Every Child's Success With Their Family!
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➢ Special Education and Family Engagement Mary McLaughlin posted 6/16/2016 Teacher.org (retrieved January, 2019)

➢ Bozeman Area Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) https://www.bozemansepta.org

➢ The Orchid Club http://orchidclubmt.org
THANK YOU!!!

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