

Making it Work for Families of Students with Disabilities

Bridging the Gap Between Families and Providers

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Parent Network of WNY

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Our Mission

Parents helping parents and professionals enable individuals with disabilities to reach their own potential

Services we provide:

- Parent and professional training
- Special Education Law
- Disability-related topics
- Services outside of school
- Information and Referral services



Developed by The Parent Network of WNY

Learning Objectives

- Participants will understand the **barriers** that interfere with effective communication and strategies to overcome the barriers
- Participants will learn about strategies and tools that will **establish and maintain** effective collaboration between families (including hard to reach families) and schools

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT THINK SHEET	
To me...Family Engagement means...	What strategies do I use to connect with hard to reach families?
In what ways does my program support school/family/ community relationships?	Reasons why I think families are not engaged:

Sometimes It's Just A UFO

UFO

- Unintended Flashes of the Obvious!



Did you know that.....

According to McGill Smith (1997) the painful loss that a parent feels when faced with the birth or identification of a child's disability results in parents going through one or all of the eight stages of grief and loss.

- *Denial*
- *Anger*
- *Fear*
- *Guilt*
- *Confusion*
- *Powerlessness*
- *Disappointment*
- *Rejection*

What are some things families do when they are struggling?



What's it like.....



Strategies for Success:

- Acknowledge the legitimacy of families' emotions *not their behavior
- Do not try to resolve or "cure" this
- Recognize families' "trigger" issues. Attempt to align yourself when you can. Be honest and clear when you cannot, agree to disagree and identify mutual goals
- Utilize your natural strengths (humor, self effacement, empathy) to assist you in doing so

Effective Communication

Why is Effective Communication Important?

It results in...

- Trust and mutual respect
- Understanding different perspectives
- Meaningful participation for **ALL**
- Increased family engagement
- Better outcomes for youth – both in-school and post-school

Epstein, J.L. (2007). *Partnerships Then and Now*. Baltimore, MD: National Network of Partnership Schools at John Hopkins University.

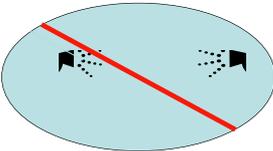
Family Engagement When Linked to Learning Results in...

- Higher grades and test scores
- Increased participation in more challenging academic programs
- More classes passed and credits earned
- Better attendance
- Improved behavior at home and at school
- Better social skills and adaptation to school
- **Improved Post-School Outcomes**

Epstein, J.L. (2007). *Partnerships Then and Now*. Baltimore, MD: National Network of Partnership Schools at John Hopkins University.

Perspectives

What Can Get in the Way of Effective Communication?



- History
- Positions and Interests
- Underlying issues
- Culture

10/90 RULE

10% of our time talking about the past...
90% of our time talking about making things better!

NYS Commission on Quality of Care

Identify Positions and Interests: What is the Difference?

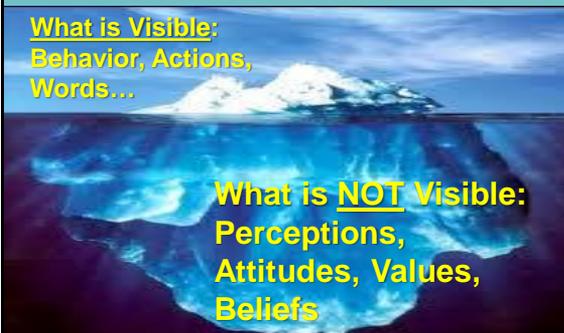
Perspectives

Position... WHAT?	Interest... WHY?
	

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Iceberg

What is Visible:
Behavior, Actions,
Words...



What is NOT Visible:
Perceptions,
Attitudes, Values,
Beliefs

Perspectives

Culture refers to:



The foundational values & beliefs that set standards for how people perceive, interpret, and behave within their family, school, and community.
Your cultural background influences what you value, how you think, and how you behave.

Building Trust with Schools and Diverse Families,
Cori Brewster and Jennifer Rallsback (2003)

Culture

Types of Cultures

- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Age
- Language
- Geography
- Gender
- Race
- Disability
- Income



Relationships

Building Relationships

Communication has a role in the coming together and the coming apart of relationships.

Elements of Communication

How DO We Communicate?

- Listening
- Speaking
- Writing
- Use of Body Language

Listening

Did you know?

- The average person talks a rate of about 125-175 words per min. We listen at a rate of up to 450 words per minute.

Marshall Peters
Center for Dispute Resolution



- *“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”*

Stephen Covey, "Habit 5"
Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

Listening

EARS



EYES

UNDIVIDED
ATTENTION

HEART

The Chinese Characters
that make up the verb "to listen."
Tell us something about this skill.

Listening

Active Listening is...

- Acknowledging (I hear you)
- Paraphrasing (rephrase)
- Reflecting (Think back)
- Clarifying (Ask questions)
- Elaborating (For example)
- Summarizing (In a nutshell)



Speaking

Make sure you have finished speaking, before your audience has finished listening!

Be conscious of:

- Tone of voice
- Speed of speech
- Use of Jargon
- Keeping phone calls brief
- Being positive and encouraging
- Don't use clichés or generic comments

Use Body Language

**Pay Attention to Non-Verbal Cues
Yours & Theirs**

Wordless- (mostly visual) messages

- Body Language
 - Gestures
 - Posture
- Facial expression
- Eye contact
- "Customer-friendly"

Writing

Written Communication

Written communication can be an efficient and effective way to connect program and home:

- Organize concise, accurate information in a readable format
- Create a variety of formats
- Use technology – email, websites, parent portals
- Provide frequent exchanges to promote engagement
- Be Creative....

WORKING WITH FAMILIES THINK SHEET

To me...Family Involvement means...	What strategies do I use to connect with hard to reach families?
In what ways does my program support school/family/ community relationships?	Reasons why I think families are not involved:

Reflection Time:
 *Star one thing you wrote that you will continue
 +Add one thing that you want to improve or start doing

Additional Resources

Learn More...

Local NYSED Special Education- Parent Center

Harvard Family Research Project
www.hfrp.org

Johns Hopkins School Partnerships
www.partnershipschools.org

National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools
www.sedl.org

National Center for Parent Involvement in Education
www.ncpie.org

Multicultural Transition Planning: Including All Youth with Disabilities
 Chapter 5: Audrey A.Trainor and Sunyoung Kim
 Life Beyond the Classroom
