Collaboration and Communication
Strategies for Parents and Schools
Goals

- What’s the difference between communication and collaboration?
- Why do we care?
- Facts about communication
- Tips for good communication
- Power of reframing
- What parents want us to know
What’s the difference between Communication and Collaboration?
• Merriam-Webster.com defines communication as: the act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviors to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc. to someone else.
Region One PRC’s DVD, “Recipe for Student Success” defines collaboration as: a partnership with the purpose of working together for a common goal. Collaboration is not an “activity”; it’s an ongoing process. One of the best ways to foster collaboration is to learn how to communicate effectively with one another in order to build trust.
Why Do We Care?
Benefits for Schools

- Get parents on your side
- More support from families
- Better reputation in the community
- Higher job satisfaction for teachers and staff
- Better student outcomes
Facts about Communication
The Laws of Forgetting

- We forget 50% of what we hear immediately.

- We forget 75% of what we hear within two months.

- Of the 25% that we do remember, only 60% is correct. The other 40% is made up of things that we “remember”...that were never said in the first place!
How We Really Communicate

- Vocabulary (7%)
- Vocal Inflections (38%)
- Nonverbal Behavior (55%)
Tips for Good Communication
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do:</th>
<th>Don’t:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make good eye contact</td>
<td>Cross your arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smile (where appropriate!)</td>
<td>Roll your eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lean forward</td>
<td>Compulsively check your phone and/or clock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nod to show that you’re paying attention</td>
<td>Sigh heavily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Be Self Aware

- Do you have preconceived notions about how this communication is going to go (in other words, are you remembering the adage, “There are two sides to every story.”)?
- Are you judging the parent or family?
- What kind of tone is your “default” tone?
- Do you understand that the parent has (and is supposed to have!) a different perspective from your own?
- Are you an active listener and do you have any “listening bad habits”?
Have a Plan

1. Goal

- What message do you want to convey?
- What do you want to have happen as a result of this communication?
Have a Plan

2. Audience

- With whom am I talking?

- What is our degree of familiarity?

- Are there language or cultural issues with which I need to be aware?
3. **Approach**

- What approach will open and enhance communication?
The Power of “Reframing”
What is reframing?

• Reframing is the act of changing a question or a statement so that the perspective shifts—sometimes from a “negative” into a “positive”. Reframing can also provide for an entirely different set of solutions to a question or problem.
Reframing

If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first fifty-five minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes.”

-Albert Einstein

Watch:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwjAAAgGi-90
EXAMPLES OF REFRAMING
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change this:</th>
<th>To this:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• My mother is always interfering.</td>
<td>• My mother has a strong need to protect me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why did you set up your classroom this way?</td>
<td>• This classroom set-up is interesting! Can you tell me why this works well for you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This seems like a parenting issue.</td>
<td>• Tell me what kind of issues you’re having at home. I may have some strategies that can help you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Passive to Active

Change this:

- I really doubt I do anything about this.
- We’ve always done it this way.

To this:

- What is one small step I can take toward this goal?
- What are the reasons for having always done it this way and are they sound?
Change this:

- What is $5 + 5$?
- We need to build a bridge to get from here to there.

To this:

- What numbers can be added together to make 10?
- We need to get from here to there. We could build a bridge, dig a tunnel, paddle a canoe, build a zipline....
What Parents Want Us to Know
This is what they’d tell you if they could…

- I’m not an educator. Please explain things to me in a way that I can understand.
- I may not be questioning you because I disagree; I’m only trying to understand.
- Please welcome me. I might have a lot of baggage.
- Please communicate with me in more than one way. Families differ in their abilities to plan ahead.
- Let me explain to you what our home life looks like.
- Please investigate before you make assumptions.
This is what they’d tell you if they could...

- Please make time to contact me about the good things my child is doing.
- Sometimes, I’m going to be in disagreement and possibly even denial. Please be patient with me and I may come around.
- Please clarify for me exactly what it is that you’d like me to do.
- I know that grades are important, but what I desperately want is for my child to have friends and fit in. Please make time to discuss these things with me, as well.


Lee, Charlene. *Special Education: A Parent’s Perspective*. Conducted for Chesterfield County Public Schools, Richmond, Virginia.