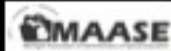


BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN CHALLENGING HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS



Acknowledgements

- The Harvard Negotiation Project- Moving from Difficult Conversations to Learning Conversations
- Knowledge base of experienced teachers and administrators, support personnel, parents, and support personnel, and outside agencies.
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- In Search of a Heart- Creating Consciousness, Caring, and Control in All Children (Vita, 2007)
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- Parents and Administrators from Muskegon County
- Carolyn Smith-Gardes, M.Ed., Assistant Director for Special Education, MAUSD
- Teachers from Michigan School PDS/MSL/Teams
- New York State Parental Information & Resource Center

■ **“Despite what we sometimes pretend, our initial purpose for having a difficult conversation is often to prove a point, to give them a piece of our mind, or to get them to do what we want. In other words, to deliver a message.”**

Seeing through another person's eyes



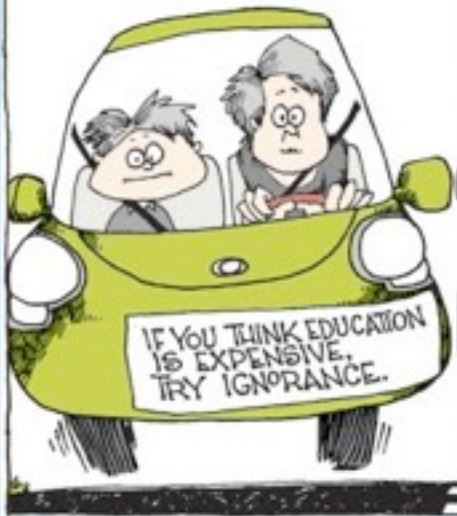
- The only reason I always try to meet and know the parents better is because it helps me to forgive their children.

~Louis Johannot

The Power of Home School Partnerships

- An Immigrant
- A story of dysfunctional proportions
- A story of ignorance
- A story of blaming
- A story of modeling and inspiration
- A story of hope





NORMS

- Please place your phones on vibrate
- Please keep an open mind
- Please fully participate in all of the pair shares
- Please jot down specific questions or concerns and leave them with me during breaks
- Feel free to offer helpful solutions or strategies
- Please reflect honestly about your setting
- Please fully participate in role plays
- Please let me know if you will be leaving early
- Please do not mention any school or individual my name
- Please respond to the come together signal



Today's Agenda

- Introductions
- Competing Pathways
- Definition of the Problem
- Setting Events for Parents
- Setting Events for School
- Antecedents or triggers for parents
- Antecedents or triggers for staff
- Consequences and Needs during conflict
- Three Possible End Points
- Setting Event Strategies for school and family
- Antecedent or prevention strategies for school and family
- Replacement Skills: The Learning Conversation
- Coming to Resolution
- When Resolution is Impossible
- Deal with Specific Challenging Profiles –Panel Discussion
- Processing Interviews with of CD and Administrators
- Distribution of C.D. Toolbox



■ "If you hear that someone is speaking ill of you, instead of trying to defend yourself you should say: "He obviously does not know me very well, since there are so many other faults he could have mentioned"."

[Columbus](#)



Research

One out of six teachers nationwide leaves the profession every year. Parent management is the top reason cited by almost half of those who leave.

Harvard Graduate School of Education 2009

Pair share

- Without mentioning any names, choose a partner from outside your school and describe a home-school conflict that you are having now, or have had in the past. What made dealing with this parent so difficult?

Three Leverage Points for Transformation



Our most challenging parents:

- May not respond to traditional approaches
- Will require more support and change on our part
- Will need a significant positive relationship at school
- Will need another way to meet their needs
- May be resistant to strategies that promote collaboration
- Will test our ability to be professional and collaborative.

BARRIERS
TWO GENERAL CATEGORIES

1. Structural
2. Psychological



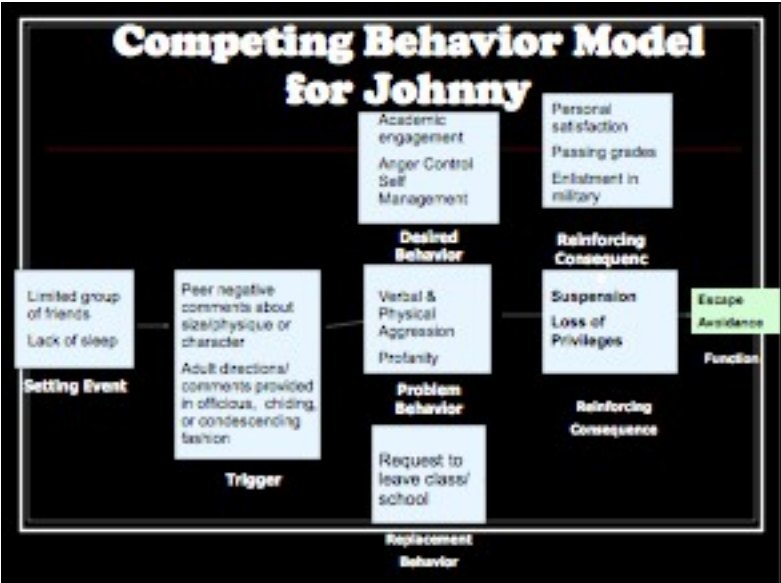


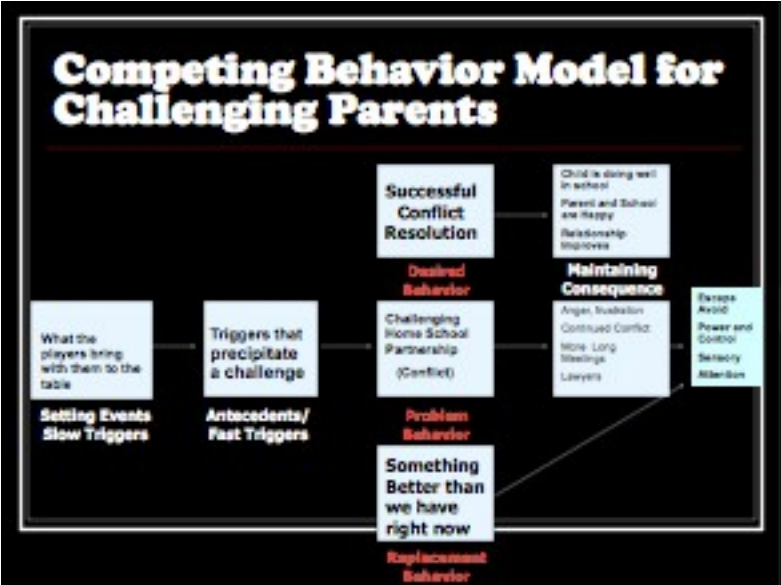
■ "We are way more powerful when we turn to each other and not on each other, when we celebrate our diversity, focus on our commonality, and together tear down the mighty walls of injustice."
-- Cynthia McKinney

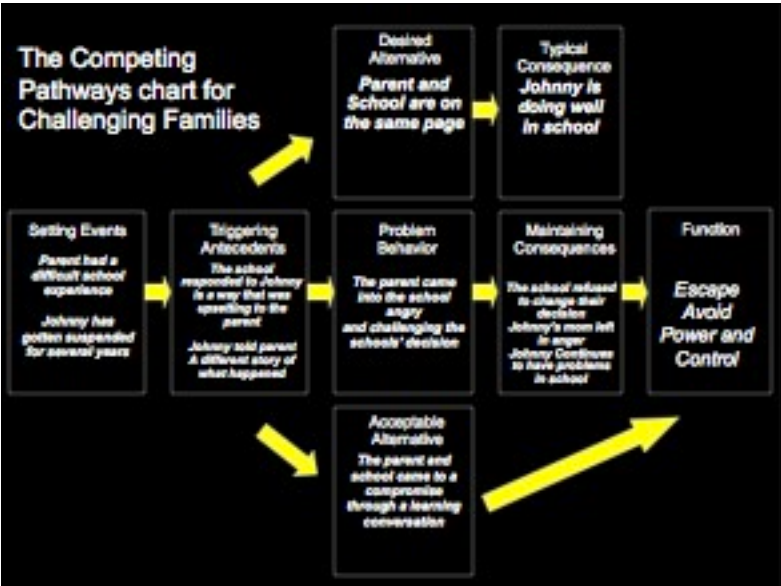
Competing Behavior Model



HANDOUT







Initial Line of Inquiry



An Initial Line of Inquiry

Slow Triggers (Setting Events)	Fast Triggers (Antecedents)	Behavior Problem	Actual Consequences	Perceived Function
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Slow Triggers (Setting Events)	Fast Triggers (Antecedents)	Behavior Problem	Actual Consequences	Perceived Function
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An ongoing
challenging
relationship
with a
family or
parent in
which a
great deal
of time is
spent and
no real
positive
change
takes place

Slow Triggers (Setting Events)	Fast Triggers (Antecedents)	Behavior Problem	Actual Consequences	Perceived Function

Slow Triggers (Setting Events)	Fast Triggers (Antecedents)	Behavior Problem	Actual Consequences	Perceived Function
	Events with a discrete onset and offset, that occur immediately before the challenging behavior (e.g., parent accuses the school of misrepresenting the facts, a school staff gets angry and defensive, someone doesn't show up to the meeting, etc)	An ongoing challenging relationship with a family or parent in which a great deal of time is spent and no real positive change takes place		

Slow Triggers (Setting Events)	Fast Triggers (Antecedents)	Behavior Problem	Actual Consequences	Perceived Function
Events that may occur before and/or during the conflict that causes the parent or school to respond to a "typical" situation in an "atypical" way. Specific conditions, events, or activities that make the problem behavior worse? (history of academic failure, history of problem behavior, distrust/ frustration, lack of a relationship, a reactive rather than preventative orientation)	Events with a discrete onset and offset, that occur immediately before the challenging behavior (e.g., parent accuses the school of misrepresenting the facts, a school staff gets angry and defensive, someone doesn't show up to the meeting, etc)	An ongoing challenging relationship with a family or parent in which a great deal of time is spent and no real positive change takes place		

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Slow Triggers (Setting Events)	Fast Triggers (Antecedents)	Behavior Problem	Actual Consequences	Perceived Function
<p>Events that may occur before and/or during the conflict that causes the parent or school to respond to a "typical" situation in an "atypical" way.</p> <p>Specific conditions, events, or activities that make the problem behavior worse? (history of academic failure, history of problem behavior, distrust, frustration, lack of a relationship, a reactive rather than preventative orientation)</p>	<p>Events with a discrete onset and offset, that occur immediately before the challenging behavior (e.g., task demand, teacher direction, social interaction)</p>	<p>An observable and measurable description of the behavior(s) of concern.</p>	<p>Those events that occur after the behavior (e.g., peer attention, escape task) or as a result of the behavior (e.g., time out, suspension, detention, ...)</p> <p>What usually happens after the behavior occurs? (e.g., teacher's reaction, other students' reactions, power struggle ...)</p>	<p>The need or function of the parent and the school</p> <p>Anger frustratio n</p> <p>Control Attention</p> <p>Escape or Avoid</p>

Slow Triggers (Setting Events)	Fast Triggers (Antecedents)	Behavior Problem	Actual Consequences	Perceived Function
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Our Goal

- Through collaboration, for both parties to have their needs at least partially addressed through the process, in a manner which optimally sends the student a message of alliance.

Vitto, 2009

What often happens..

An example of an adversarial sequence of events

The Evolution of Adversarial Relationships and Subversion

- As aberrant behaviors begin to surface an unhealthy communication paradigm emerges
- A phone call home, a detention slip, a suspension

THE STAGE IS SET



The Reaction Continuum

- "My son wouldn't do that!!
 - "I will punish him."
 - "What do you expect me to do?"
 - "You guys are always kicking him out!!
- At this point a shift begins and the parent and school are at risk for developing an adversarial relationship.

THE FIRST SIGNS

- "He says other kids were doing the same thing and nothing happened to them"

The Downward Spiral

- Without evidenced based decision making the school continues to respond in the only way they know how-punishment and exclusion.
- Without proper supports, the parent becomes trapped in a dilemma. Do I blame myself, my child, or the school?
- And a day comes when the parent begins to blame the school, and the real damage begins...

What Johnny Learns



- Johnny is becoming increasingly dis-enfranchised with school
- Johnny figures out that he if he tells his parents he was picked on, singled out, overly or repeatedly punished, then his parents will begin to focus on the school rather than his behaviors.
- It becomes increasing probable for Johnny to misrepresent the school. He escapes punishment and takes the focus off of him.
- By blaming the school, the parents avoid blame, and are relieved of the feeling of helplessness,
- The end result: a parent who rescues, defends, accuses a child who has a escape card-any time he wants to use it.

Communication

- Having students be the go between is ripe with potential problems!!!!



- If you promise not to believe everything your child says happens at school, I'll promise not to believe everything he says happens at home. ~Anonymous Teacher

THE SOLUTION

1. Don't rely on a punishment at home for a behavior that occurs at school.
2. When you meet have all the players in the same room.
3. Designate one communication point person.
4. Have an expected communication protocol that minimizes misrepresentation.
5. Have the plan clearly stated.
Document, Document, Document!
6. Agree to advocate, agree to disagree, but never, never in front of the child.
7. For the parent that doesn't follow through, focus on the positives.

CONSEQUENCE STRATEGIES

BEST PRACTICE & EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

- Many of the conflicts persist when we continue to utilize ineffective practices
- It is much easier to make our case when we are data driven, focused on prevention, individualizing, and utilizing best practice.
- A Relationship Based on Trust
- Trying to defend an ineffective one size fits all approach is contrary to everything we know about learning.

FOUNDATION FOR TODAY'S WORK

- THE COMPETING PATHWAYS FORM



Description of Problem of Concern

- How would you describe the nature of the conflict with this parent?

Example:

The parent continuously defends the child, the parent blames the school for the child's behavior, the parent is irrational, etc.

What does a challenging home-school partnership look & feel like?

- A deteriorating relationship that never had a chance of starting off on the right foot.
- A series of emotional meetings that seem to go no where.
- A communication and trust breakdown that gets worse over time.
- At times it may feel like a game, a battle, or a challenge to endure.
- Two groups of people coming from two different directions resulting in a child getting lost or harmed in the process
- A conflict with a parent or parents who defend, accuse, misrepresent, blame, judge, deny, yell, threaten, bully, etc.

A conflict in the making

Vignette- Pre-school Setting

Understanding Aggressive Behaviors

- **Reactive Aggression**
 - Affective or expressive aggression
 - Loss of control and emotional flooding
 - Emotions are dominant
- **Proactive Aggression**
 - Instrumental or operant aggression
 - Goal oriented
 - Cognitions are dominant

“Conflict is constructive if it helps build new insights and establishes new patterns in a relationship.”

The hallmark of a destructive conflict is a lack of flexibility in responding to others.”

Steven A. Beebe and others in *Interpersonal communication; relating to others.*

Setting Events



The Journey

- "A truly compassionate attitude toward others does not change even if they behave negatively or hurt you." — Dalai Lama XIV

- Video

Setting Events for Parents

- The parent had a negative school experience when they were in school and still sees school as an adversary.
- The parent has problems with authority figures.
- The parent is being influenced by someone else.
- The parent only hears from the school when there is bad news.
- The parent sees other kids being treated differently than their own (e.g. MCC example)
- The parent is struggling with the child as well but feels that he will be blamed if he admits this.
- The parent does not trust the school.
- The parent is in denial about their child
- The parent makes inaccurate assumptions about the school's intent.

Adapted from the Difficult Parent, 2006

SETTING EVENTS IMPACTING VARIABLES

- Passive aggressive
- Easily Influenced by Others
- Persecution Complex
- Disgruntled Confidant
- Bully or exaggerated sense of Entitlement
- Social Maladjustment
- Victim or Martyr Mentality
- Borderline Personality
- Poverty
- Cognitively Impaired
- The Parent is in Denial
- Mental Illness
- Parent is Nonresponsive
- Divorce
- Substance Abuse
- Cultural Differences



What might challenging parents say about the school's behavior

- They don't call me unless there is a problems (Lack of communication)
- The don't acknowledge my child's strengths
- The are defensiveness and inflexible
- The say one thing and do another.
- They are unwillingness to admit mistakes and apologize
- They are Disrespectful and Unprofessional (rudeness, condescension, lashing out, breaking confidentiality, being asked for advice and it not being taken etc.)
- The are punishing my child because of me

Adapted from "How to Deal with Parents Who are Angry, Troubled, Afraid or Just Plain Crazy" by Elaine K. Molwan 2008
Corwin Books.

Times Have Changed



VS.



- Nuclear family
- Respect for authority
- Children taught lessons about choices and consequences
- Want the best for children

- Many different family configurations
- Questions authority
- Parents mistake rescuing as love
- Want the best for children

Parenting can go from one Extreme to Another



Assumptions by Challenging Parents

- "You have to fight to get what you want."
- "The school doesn't think I know anything."
- "There are people at the school who don't like my child and don't want him there."
- "The school doesn't understand my child like I do."
- "The school never listens to me or takes my suggestions."
- "School is no different now than it was when I was a student having problems there."
- "It's all about who you know. There is no equality when it comes to discipline."
- "The school blames me for all of Johnnie's problems."



- A *misperception* is a mistaken belief, idea or interpretation about something. When you think someone has misrepresented you in a harmful manner, you develop a negative perception about that person or the place or position they represent. Whether perceptions or accurate may be irrelevant. For that person, they are real!!

Parent Talking About School

- vignette

Setting Events for Parents

- Write down a few of the setting events for your most challenging parent.



Setting Events for School Staff



Assumption of Challenged Educators

- This parent is in serious denial.
- With this parent, we can't do anything right.
- Their child has them buffaloed and consistently misrepresents what happens at school.
- There are no consequences or carryover at home.
- We have rules that apply to all kids. We do not show favoritism. We follow the handbook.
- The parent is always rescuing and defending him.
- This parent will never change!!

Different Hats and Different Roles

- Do you have a disgruntled parent or staff person who is undermining the current home-school partnership by breaking confidence or misrepresenting the school?
- Do some educators, by the nature of their job, see the child in a different context? (e.g., principal vs. consultant)
- Do you have different people giving information to the parents that is not complete or consistent?
- Do different school staff see the situation differently ("We are going above and beyond for Johnny." "John really doesn't belong at our school.")?

Staff Setting Events

- Do you have a staff person who is not being therapeutic in their approach?
- Do you have staff coming into a difficult family school meeting who are NOT in agreement with each other?
- Do you have staff that may engage in passive aggressive behavior? Why?
- Is the staff in question using a relationship driven approach?
- Do you have staff who refuses to make accommodations, follow behavior plans, etc.?
- Do you have a staff who speaks disrespectfully to the parent?
- Poor or Inefficient Communication Patterns between team members (e.g., Teacher and Aid)
- Unclear Role Responsibility
- Holding on to Ineffective Practices

Other Setting Events for Staff

- Is there a collective mentality developing in the building? (e.g., the break room, the hallway, the parking lot, teacher's meetings).
- Do staff make assumptions about the intentions of parents?
- Is there a culture of intolerance or acceptance? (example)

OTHER SETTING STAFF SETTING EVENTS

- Staff have a limited time that they can meet.
- Staff have not kept good documentation or data.
- Staff have little experience with challenging parents.
- The school doesn't have a plan for meeting and responding to the concerns of this parent.
- Letting the family-school history cloud objectivity
- Unprofessional "talk" before and after meeting
- The school hasn't clarified potential restrictive consequences (restraint, management, police involvement, etc.)

OTHER SETTING STAFF SETTING EVENTS

- Staff may report the situation differently to different people. Why?
- If a staff person isn't using best practice there will be other people in the building who are aware of it.
- If there are not clear expectations for staff behavior
- Does the squeaky wheel get the grease (the most outspoken staff member?)
- Staff believe that they are right!
- Staff are unable to drop their ego.

Other Concerns

- Poor communication between team members.
- Too many individuals communicating with families without communicating with each other.
- What is the student learning from this ongoing conflict?
- Is there a collective attitude developing in the building? (this kid shouldn't be here)
- Is a staff person (s) responding to the parents behavior and losing site of the child?
- Is there someone that can help you objectively evaluate the conflict? (e.g., take a look at other schools to gain perspective)
- Staff have never debriefed and become defensive when feedback is given. (Why is this a problem?)
- The school has had little or no contact with the family prior to a problematic incident.

We have to always see the humanity in each and every family.

Staff Talking About Parents

Is there an elephant on the table?

- If, so address it sooner, rather than later.



Setting Events for Staff

- Write down the setting events you believe are operating for staff.
- Share a couple of these setting events with your partner.

Antecedents or Triggers



What Reasons Cause Parents to get Angry At Schools?



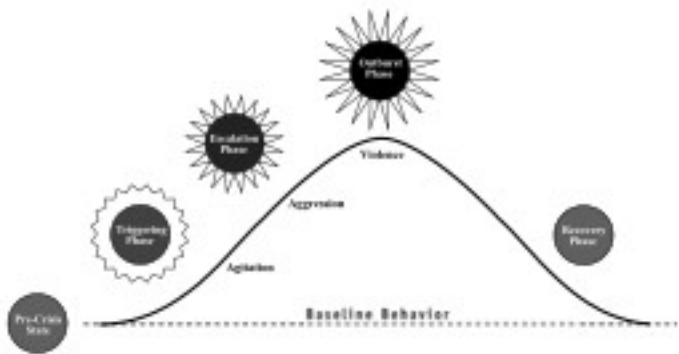
But, But It's
Not A Bad
Report Card.
Think Of It
As A
Wide Open
Road To
Improvement!

Communication and Parents

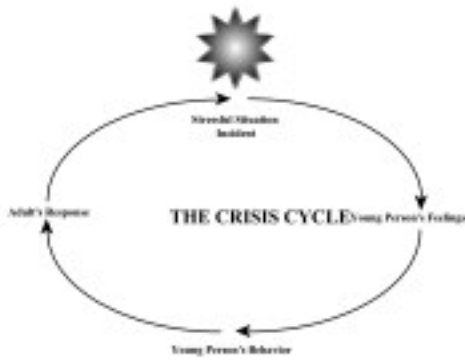
Failure to communicate has been found to be the **#1** reason parents get mad.



Stress Model of Crisis



Crisis Cycle



TC TRAINING (30)

Role play a conflict with a parent

What is Anger?



"Anger is an experience that occurs when a goal, value, or expectation that (parents or teachers) have chosen has been blocked or when (their) sense of personal worth is threatened."



Triggers or Antecedent for Challenging Parents

- Judgmental comments in a note or phone conversation.
- Perception that their child is getting mistreated.
- Not being given a chance to give their side of the story.
- Making decisions without their input.
- Being told that their child might need a different placement.
- Being told their child is failing.
- Being told their child has lost school privileges.
- Being told that the child has been restrained, managed or isolated without prior knowledge.
- Being suspended for multiple days.
- Leaks in confidentiality.
- Inaccurate or lacking documentation of the event.
- Being told two different stories.

What are your triggers?



Antecedents or triggers for Parents

- Write down a few of the antecedents for your most challenging parent.

Triggers or Antecedents for Staff Recognizing Our Triggers

- Being accused of mistreating a child
- Being accused of lying
- Being accused of not liking a child or playing favorites.
- Being accused of persecuting or harassing a child
- Being blamed for a child's failure
- Being yelled at, subjected to profanity, threatened or treated in a hostile manner.
- A parent who blames you or makes excuse for every thing their child does.
- Being compared to a past teacher or school who "didn't have problems" with the student.
- A parent who believes the child's rendition of the facts over yours.
- Having to attend multiple meetings.

Teaching Staff talking about Challenging Parents

- vignette

Antecedents or triggers for staff

- Write down a few of the antecedents for your staff.

The Problem Behavior or Challenge



The Problem Behavior

- A discussion in which disagreement is expressed;
- An oral disagreement; verbal opposition; contention; altercation: a violent *argument*
- an open clash between two opposing groups (or individuals)
- A state of disharmony between incompatible or antithetical persons, ideas, or interests; a clash.

Competing Pathways

- Objectively describe the conflict in the "problem" square



Their Story Pair share

- Place yourself in their shoes. How would they describe the conflict you described in your story?

Replacement Skills

Consequences of Challenging Relationships

- The ego takes over and we become defensive and entrenched.
- No resolution is reached.
- The student becomes further immersed in the conflict cycle (due to passive aggressive behavior)
- The relationship is further damaged
- Both sides become passive aggressive
- One or both sides make assumptions about intent

Possible Functions of Challenging Behavior During a Conflict or Argument (for both sides)

- **Escape/Avoidance**
- **Attention/Status**
- **Sensory-Power Control/Retaliation**
- **Anger/Frustration**
- **Operating on feelings instead of data**

Preservation of the Ego

- The perception I have of myself.
- Know where your ego strength is identified
- The collective ego (e.g., our department, our teachers)
- Winning, Retaliating, Controlling.
- Letting go of the ego

Lesson Learned

HOW DO WE BEST RESPOND?

WHAT IS EVIDENCED BASED PRACTICE

- **Setting Event Strategies**
- **Antecedent Strategies**
- **Teaching Replacement Strategies**
- **Consequence Strategies**
 - a. reward systems
 - b. reduction strategies

Abandoning ineffective practices will minimize conflicts with challenging families.

- Data driven decision making
- A Response to Intervention Approach
- Contraindicated systemic approaches
- The Lure of Exclusion
- Developing a Culture of Prevention
- Where does the leader stand?
- A culture of respect!!

SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Twelve Preventative Practices for School Administrators for Challenging Families

1. Make it clear to staff what you want to be informed about and when.
2. Know who is communicating with parents- when, why and where.
3. Make sure teachers know what is unacceptable behavior with students and parents-and even more importantly, that guest teachers know as well (the duct tape incident), and assure that crisis plans are in place and understood.
4. Make a time to meet proactively with potentially challenging families
5. Get to know the child or the situation prior to talking with the family.
6. If there is disagreement about what is going on in the classroom, observe first hand.
7. Attempt to find out what staff are communicating to outside support personnel.
8. Assure that teachers understand rules about confidentiality.
9. Use I statements and stay in a non-defensive posture.
10. Be a proponent of evidenced based practice!!!
11. Be approachable. If staff are intimidated by you they won't come to you when they have a problem!!!
12. Be fully present at meetings!!!

Evidence Based Practices in Classroom Management

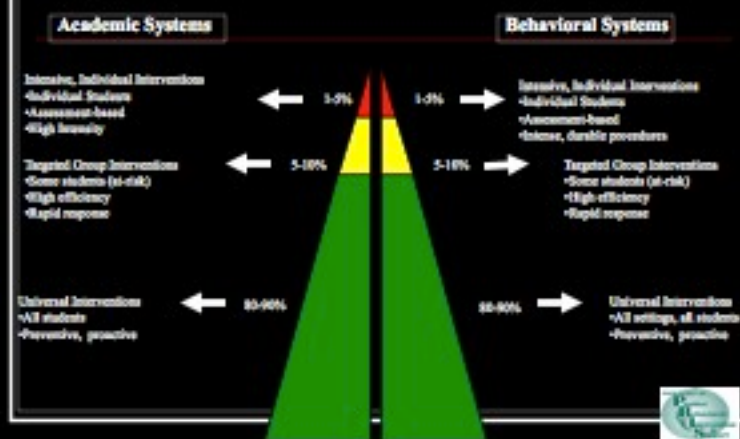
1. **Maximize structure** in your classroom.
2. **Post, teach, review, monitor, and reinforce** a small number of positively stated **expectations**.
3. **Actively engage** students in observable ways.
4. **Establish a continuum of strategies to acknowledge appropriate behavior.**
5. **Establish a continuum of strategies to respond to inappropriate behavior.**

(Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2011)

RTI- Are classroom response cost systems contributing to defiance?

- Response to Intervention
- Are we using evidenced based classroom behavior management systems at the universal level? Are classroom response cost systems evidenced based? Is there a balance, better yet, an overbalance of Positive Incentives and Feedback for Desired Behavior?
- When universal consequences (e.g., Classroom Response Cost System) are not effective, or when they trigger an escalation of behavior, do we differentiate our approach?
- Are we over-relying on classroom response cost systems to manage student behaviors?

Designing School-Wide Systems for Student Success



According to Research, the LEAST EFFECTIVE responses to problem behavior are:

- **Counseling**
- **Psychotherapy**
- **Punishment** (O'Leary, 1997; Lipsey, 1991; Lipsey & Wilson, 1990; Tolson & Guerra, 1994)
- **Exclusion is the most common response for conduct-disordered, juvenile delinquent, and behaviorally disordered youth** (Lano & Murisano, 1997) **but it is largely ineffective.**

Why Then, Do We Educators, Resource Officers, and Counselors Employ These Procedures?

When WE experience aversive situations, we select interventions that produce immediate (rather than sustained) relief. We tend to focus on our concerns, not the student's.

- Remove the student.
- Remove ourselves.
- Modify the physical environment.
- Assign responsibility for change to student and/or others.

For Challenging Families Repeated Punishment and Exclusion Sets the Stage for Conflict & Passive Aggressive Behavior

- Modeling disrespect in front of the child
- Recruiting support from the "disenfranchised"
- Progressively undermining the school
- Developing an adversarial posture
- Distancing from the school community

According to Research, the MOST EFFECTIVE responses to problem behavior are:

- Social skills training
- Academic and curricular restructuring
- Behavioral Interventions (Gottfredson, 1997; Lipsey, 1991, 1992; Lipsey & Wilson, 1993; Tolan & Guerra, 1994)
- Mentoring & Relationship Driven Approaches
- Teaching replacement skills

What ?!
ME CHANGE?!

THEY'RE
the problem.
(not me).

Thinking Outside of the Box

- There will always be situations when it is necessary to punish or exclude. However, having a plan for connecting with the student, building on his strengths, and building his competencies by teaching replacement skills and involving the family in a positive manner, will have a diffusing effect on challenges.

Setting Event Strategies for Staff Responding to Challenging Families

- Develop a Meeting Protocol with a Specific Agenda and a facilitator (e.g., Meeting Mechanics).
- Develop a staff code of conduct related to discussions about this family (break room, meetings, etc.).
- Assign a person and process for communicating with this parent.
- Remind all staff about the importance of confidentiality.
- Support staff in understanding that best practice may involve them changing their approach to the child.

A dysfunctional meeting....

- video

Setting Event Strategies for Staff and Challenging Families

- Provide structured opportunities for staff to vent and express their concerns. Resolve dissension and disagreement before the meeting.
- Prepare for the meeting and rehearse responding to potential threatening situations.
- Always debrief after challenging meetings (e.g., what went well, what didn't help, have a letting go exercise).
- Agree on how documentation will be collected and reported.

Develop a Culture of Prevention through Debriefing, Data Driven Decision Making, and a Focus on using Educational Approaches as the major treatment for Challenging Students and Families



Setting Event Strategies



Frame of Reference

"Seek first to understand... then to be understood."

Stephen Covey

Understanding Parents

"The more challenging the parents are, the more their child needs educators to be the voice of reason and to always model the way a person should act."



Vitto, 2007

RELATIONSHIP

Research says...It Matters

- **Parents** often form their opinions about the quality of a whole school based on their relationship with their child's teacher.
- Establish a positive relationship before the problems begin.
- Recognize Cultural Differences

Where trust is present, there is:

- less stress
- no feeling of manipulation
- easier to anticipate behavior
- more willingness to commit to goals

Obstacles to Trust

- Preaching, Requesting and Demanding before listening!
- Assumptions (Walking in their shoes)
- The AAPI and Parent Training
- Being Out Numbered, Uncomfortable Location
- A History of Betrayal: A broken spirit
- Broken Promises
- Separate Realities

Building Trust & Relationships

- Discuss with a partner how you have built trust with a challenging parent?



Helping Families Impact their Setting Events

- Connecting families with outside agencies (e.g., Family Resource Center, Community Mental Health, Psychologists, Psychiatrists, etc. through a "Wrap Around" approach.
- Bringing all the players to the table to collaborate and coordinate supports.
- Assuring that impoverished families have access to supports for food, shelter, clothing and basic needs.

Helping Families Impact their Setting Events

- Build a trusting relationship or positive connection with someone at school
- Listening, Listening, Listening
- Acknowledging the grain of truth
- Consider a communication person
- Shared Blame
- A focus of support
- Influence

CONSIDERATIONS

- How to decide on the communication person?
- The importance of keeping a positive connection at school





"Programs must meet the needs of the parents they serve rather than demand that the parents meet the needs of the program... A match between parent needs and involvement opportunities increases the possibility that the parent will become actively involved in the program."

Elizabeth Linderholm and Jo Ann Kern,
"Designing Parent Involvement Programs
Activities to Deal with Parents' Needs"



Developing a Preventative Culture

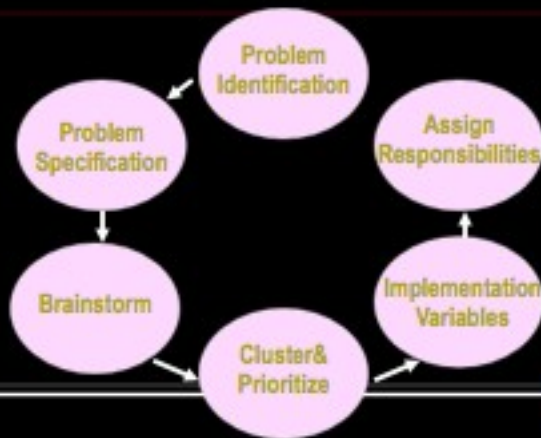
- Administrator sets the tone
- The break room
- The Hallway
- Meijers
- The Blamers
- The Passive Aggressive

Developing a Meeting Format

- Having a pre-planned format or protocol.
- Have pre-established norms.
- Setting a time frame for the meeting.
- Keeping the conversation moving forward.
- Establishing expectations for staff.
- Discussing issues that may be raised.
- (Example: Meeting Mechanics)

Setting Events for Staff

Process for Solving Problems MEETING MECHANICS



45 MINUTE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLAN DEVELOPMENT MEETING MECHANICS PROCESS SUMMARY

Problem Identification (5 minutes) IDENTIFY the problem Open-ended format Describe the problem Problem occurs 2 times	STOP _____
Problem Specification (10 minutes) How SPECIFICALLY understood by problem Operational definition Data analysis Annotated calendar form	STOP _____
Brainstorm (10 minutes) Generate possible solutions/strategies to address the problem All ideas are good ideas No criticism, debate, consensus Professional role definition Focus on identifying the best idea at the time	STOP _____
Cluster/Prioritize (5 minutes) CLUSTER ideas QUESTION quality ideas (3 points) PRIORITY ideas through comparing	STOP _____
Implementation Variables (5 minutes) Identify variables (DEPENDENT or implementation) dependent variables (10 minutes) Identify REINFORCERS (10 minutes) implement plan Determine DATA COLLECTION methods for evaluation	STOP _____
Assign Responsibilities (5 minutes) Team process Roles and functions Meeting AGENDA PLAN	STOP _____

The Challenging Meeting

- Be Prepared!!!





What do you require from each other in order to feel safe and comfortable to fully participate in this meeting?

Use welcoming body language

- Greet the parents when they enter; smile, welcome them. Take the high road.
- Be aware of facial expressions – avoid looks of anger, frustration, irritation, and condescension, rolling eyes.
- Avoid closed body language (no crossed arms).
- Eye contact
- Try to sit next to them, not across from them.



TEAM WORK

Change And Acceptance

ATTITUDE

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitudes we will embrace for that day. We cannot change the past... We cannot change the fact that people act in a certain way. The only thing we can do is play on the one thing we have, and that is our attitude... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.

-Charles Swindoll

Setting Event Strategies Pair Share

- Take a few minutes with your partner and discuss a few things you might do differently in preparing staff and teams for meetings with challenging parents.

Antecedent Strategies



Establish Norms

- How the meeting will be conducted.
- How ideas will be expressed.
- How decisions will be made.
- How people will be treated.
- How much time will be allotted.
- What will signal an end of the meeting.

Antecedent Strategies

Tips and Techniques (phone-calls)

- If at all possible, call or respond the following day, when you are rested and anger has subsided.
- As a good scout always "be prepared" (do your homework)
- Re-state limits – i.e. "I only have ten minutes for this phone call, but I am willing to set up a follow-up call tomorrow or meet with you next week."
- Listen for the "question behind the question" and say, "I think you may be asking about _____."
- If you know the type of behaviors you will be facing in a meeting or phone call prepare a strategy with colleagues, role-play possible situations and create and carry a "tip sheet" to remind you how to approach the situation

Antecedent Strategies

Sending e-mails, memos, letters, and the pros and cons of journaling

In writing:

- Proof read and have a colleague proof read – not just for grammar and spelling but for tone
- Consider all notes, on paper or via e-mail as professional documents – use your alphabet soup after your name, use letter head or official e-mail address
- If you cannot respond to a note or e-mail within one school day then let the parent know when you will reply
- Keep photocopies of written notes and print and save e-mails in case you need them

Antecedent Strategies

Antecedent or Prevention Strategies

- Always start with a positive.
- Honesty is always the best policy.
- Avoid the temptation to downplay or overplay the behavior with the challenging parent (Stick to the facts)
- Is it a skill deficit or performance deficit?
- It may be helpful to have a designated communication person for reporting problems.
- It may be helpful to provide feedback in as a summary instead of incident by incident.

Antecedent Strategy

Setting the Scene

When in person

- Shake hands and be welcoming
- Snacks and drinks are never a bad idea
- Sit "eye to eye and knee to knee"
 - Stay at eye level, not above or below the other person (have enough big people chairs available)
 - Sit face to face, don't hide behind your desk
- In group settings be aware of seating patterns avoid "us vs. them" seating
- Introduce everyone
- Set a time limit and stick to it
- Be prepared, use data
- Take notes, use quotes
- Consider having a witness or someone on call to mediate

Antecedent Strategies

Antecedent or Prevention Strategies Educators

What about these....

"She never does that at home."

"That is great! What do you do? Maybe we could try it at school?
Do you have some ideas we could try?"

"My child would never do that."

"I was surprised too. It is disappointing when he
has been working so hard."

- (Have documentation in hand)

Antecedent Strategies

WHAT CAN I DO TO GET THAT KIND OF REACTION AGAIN?



Antecedent Strategies

Prepare for the meeting!!!!

- Review data and documentation?
- Resolve disagreement among the team?
- What has caused the conflict?
- Is there some substance to the complaint?
- Is there shared contribution?
- Is the outcome a "done deal"?
- Outline the agenda of the meeting!

Antecedent Strategies Pair share

- Take a few minutes with your partner and discuss a few things you might do differently prior and during meetings with challenging parents.

Replacement Strategies

- The Learning Conversation
- A Productive Meeting
- A Workable Relationship



Replacement Skills



“The essence of principled negotiation is to separate the person from the problem, to focus on interests and not on positions, to invent options for mutual gain, and to insist on objective criteria – some external standard or principle that both parties can buy into.”

Stephen Covey, author of
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

The Basic Assumption

All behavior (including positional behavior) is ultimately positively intended, and directed at fulfilling some need.

Replacement Skills

Listen First, Persuade Later

If there's a common thread that runs through dispute resolution, it is this:

- Listen carefully before you try to convince others. You can't change someone's mind until you know how it works.
- Until you go a step further and acknowledge their concerns, people will tune you out, no matter how good your arguments or how well you state them.



The Rule!

On every issue that stirs strong feelings, the majority of people invariably bring with them a pet theory or preoccupation...If you address this preoccupation, they will listen to what you have to say. If you do not address it, they will not listen. It's almost as if people have grown so obsessed with their own theories bursting within them that they cannot pay attention until these have been addressed.

The Rule

Listen and acknowledge before you persuade.

How to Handle Angry Parents

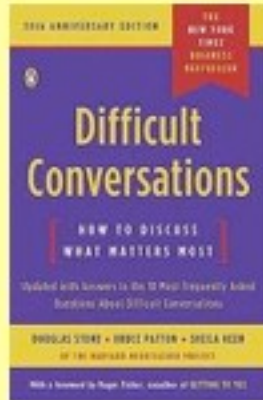
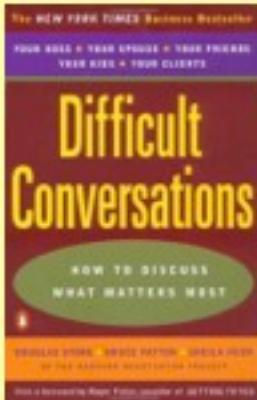
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New York State Parental
Information & Resource

Difficult Conversations





EVERY CONFLICT AND DIFFICULT
CONVERSATION IS DIFFERENT, AND
THERE IS NO ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL
ADVICE. EVEN

A difficult conversation is anything

- You find hard to talk about.



Replacement Skills

- While no amount of preparation can guarantee that the conversation will go smoothly or that you will get what you want, most people we work with report that thinking about these matters in advance helps them decide whether to have the conversation

- And if a conversation has already gone badly, you can use this worksheet to help you think through what you might try differently next time.

4. CHOOSING MY PURPOSES

- **My purposes for having a conversation.** Make a list of those things you'd like to get out of the conversation. In doing so, consider three purposes that are helpful for almost all difficult conversations:
- **Learning:** Listen first to understand, then to be understood. You almost never know everything you need to know about the situation. Seek out the pieces of the puzzle you don't have.
- **Expression:** You are an unparalleled expert on you. So, speak for yourself and how you are experiencing the problem. Consider sharing your perspective, interests, feelings, and requests.
- **Problem-Solving:** You take the lead. Once you have listened to their views and expressed your own, then you should proceed to problem solving. Ask: "Can we find a way to move forward that works for both of us?"



Difficult Conversations

There are three parts to a difficult conversation

1. What happened?
2. How am I feeling?
3. How does this impact my identity?

Replacement Skills

Difficult Conversations can be divided into two main categories

- A. "Shift to a Learning Stance"
 - B. "Create a Learning Conversation."
- The first is largely analytical, and the second is largely prescriptive.

Creating a Safe Space for Conflict Management

(Damasan Parry in *Warriors of the Heart*)

- **STOP assuming that your truth is THE truth. What is true for you is not necessarily true for another.**

Replacement Skills

1. The “What happened?” Conversation

- **Stop arguing about who’s right: explore each other’s stories**
- **Why we argue, and why it doesn’t help**
 - **We think *they* are the problem**
 - **They think *we* are the problem**
 - **We each make sense in our story of what happened**
- **Arguing blocks us from exploring each other’s stories**

Replacement Skills

What Happened?

Stone, Patton and Heen suggest that in the “what happened?” conversation discussants should explore contribution, a concept they see as distinct from fault.

The authors suggest that, rather than focusing on who is to blame, each participant should ask how she or he contributed to the predicament

What happened scenario?

For example, a father who

- is too busy at work to attend his child's basketball game doesn't intend to hurt his child, but when the father fails to attend the game, the child may feel rejected
- In the "what happened?" conversation about this situation, it may be vital to recognize that the impact of the father's nonattendance was to make the child feel rejected *and* also to recognize that this impact was not the father's intent.

Intentions

- The second set of mistakes concerns understanding the parties' intentions.
- People tend to assume that they know what the other's intentions are. However, our beliefs about another's intentions are often wrong. We base our assumptions on our own feelings; if I feel hurt then you must have meant to be hurtful.
- We also tend to think the worst of others, and the best of ourselves.
- Another mistake is to assume that once we explain that our intentions were benign, the other party has no reason to feel hurt.
- To avoid the first mistake, parties must avoid making the leap from impact to intent. Ask the other what their intent was. Remain open-minded about your own interpretation of their intent.

Arguing Without Understanding is Unpersuasive

Why we each see the world differently

Different Information

- We notice different things
- We each know ourselves better than anyone else can

Different Interpretations

- We are influenced by past experiences
- We apply different implicit rules

Our conclusions reflect self-interest

- Move from certainty to curiosity (*are we in the intent to learn*)
- Curiosity: the way into their story

Embrace both stories: adopt the "And" stance

Distinguish Blame from Contribution

- Abandon blame: map the contribution systems
- Blame is about judging, and looks backward
- Contribution is about understanding, and looks forward
- Contribution is joint and interactive

How could we make this situation worse?

Replacement Skills

Avoiding the first mistake

- Disentangle impact and intent
- Hold your view as a hypothesis
- Share the impact on you: inquire about their intentions
- Don't pretend you don't have a hypothesis
- Some defensiveness is inevitable

Replacement Skills

Avoiding the second mistake

- Listen for feelings, and reflect on your intentions
- Listen past the accusations for the feelings
- Be open to reflecting on the complexity of your intentions

Replacement Skills

2. How am I feeling? The Feelings Conversation

Feelings matter: they are at the heart of difficult conversations

- Have your feelings (or they will have you)
- We try to frame feelings out of the problem
- Unexpressed feelings can leak into the conversation
- Unexpressed feelings can burst into the conversation
- Unexpressed feelings make it difficult to listen
- Unexpressed feelings take a toll on our self-esteem and relationships

Replacement Skills

3. Impact on Identity

Three core identities threatened by difficult conversations

- Am I competent?
- Am I a good person?
- Am I worthy of love?

Replacement Skills

Identity

Three things to accept about yourself

1. You will make mistakes
2. Your intentions are complex
3. You have contributed to the problem

Replacement Skills

A third critical factor in many difficult conversations is "identity."

- A worker who defines herself as unworthy of being treated well will be unable to ask for a raise.
- A mother who defines herself as a poor communicator may find the prospect of talking with her adolescent daughter about sex quite daunting
- A parent who sees themselves as an inadequate parent may become angry when her child gets in trouble at school
- A teacher who sees themselves as a model of fairness may become defensive when accused of showing favoritism

The Ego

- If you feel the need to defend or accuse, if you feel superior or inferior, if you feel that your way is the only right way- these all represent your ego talking.

Be aware of your ego and how it may cloud your ability to listen and respond

"If you want to reach a state of bliss, then go beyond your ego and the internal dialogue. Make a decision to relinquish the need to control, the need to be approved, and the need to judge. Those are the three things the ego is doing all the time. It's very important to be aware of them every time they come up."

Deepek Chopra quotes (Indian Physician)

"Protecting our Ego is an unconscious drive. When our ego is threatened, we may become defensive, and go on the attack mode. We need to be conscious of our ego and how it is identified."

The Harvard Group recommends initiating the conversation from the “third story”—how a neutral outsider would understand the situation.

- Often people begin difficult conversations from within their own story (“Your son is being disrespectful and disruptive, which is not fair to the other students) or within the other party’s story (“I know that you feel that we don’t provide your son with the support he needs.”)
- “My son has been going through a bad time since the divorce. He is so angry at me.” Getting him to go to school has been a battle.”

The third story: Pair share

- How would an outsider or neutral party describe what is going on in your conflict??

How do I begin?

A common question is How do I begin the conversation? Here are a few conversation openers I’ve picked up over the years – and used many times!

- “I have something I’d like to discuss with you that I think will help us work together more effectively.”
- “I’d like to talk about _____ with you, but first I’d like to get your point of view.”
- “I need your help with what just happened. Do you have a few minutes to talk?”
- “I need your help with something. Can we talk about it (soon)?” If they say, “Sure, let me get back to you,” follow up with them.
- “I think we have different perceptions about _____. I’d like to hear your thinking on this.”
- “I’d like to talk about _____. I think we may have different ideas on how to _____.”
- “I’d like to see if we might reach a better understanding about _____. I really want to hear your feelings about this and share my perspective as well.”
- Write a possible opening for your conversation here:

THE "AND" STANCE

- Once you have found the courage to speak, start by saying explicitly what is most important to you. Do not use hints or leading questions. Use the "And Stance" to convey complex feelings and views.
- Do not present your views as if they were the one-and-only truth. Avoid exaggerations such as "You always," or "You never." Share the information, reasoning and experience behind your views.
- Help the other person to understand you by having them paraphrase, or asking how they see it differently.

Keeping the Conversation on Track

- Negotiators describe three powerful unilateral techniques for keeping the conversation on a constructive track.
- 1. The first technique is reframing. "Reframing means taking the essence of what the other person says and 'translating it' into concepts that are more helpful—specifically concepts from the Three Conversations framework."
- For example, blame statements should be reframed in terms of contributions.
- 2. Listening is a powerful tool. The "the single most important rule about managing the interaction is this: you can't move the conversation in a more positive direction until the other person feels heard and understood."
- 3. When in doubt about how to proceed, listen. The third technique is naming the dynamic.

When the other party persistently puts the conversation off track, for instance by interrupting or denying emotions, explicitly name that behavior and raise it as an issue for discussion. This makes the other person aware of the behavior, and it brings out more unexpressed thought and feelings.

YOU REFRAME:

- I want to make sure I understand your perspective. You obviously feel very strongly about it. I'd also like to share my perspective on the situation"

A Difficult Conversation Worksheet

Prepare by Walking Through the Three Conversations

1. Step One

- Where does your story come from?
(information, past experiences, rules)
- What impact has the situation had on you?
What might their intentions have been?
- What have you contributed to the problem?

A Difficult Conversation Worksheet

2. Understanding Emotions

- Explore your emotional footprints, and the bundle of emotions you should experience

3. Ground your Identity

- What's at stake for you about you?
- What do you need to accept to be better grounded?

A Difficult Conversation Worksheet

Step 2: Check your purposes and design whether to raise

• Purposes:

What do you hope to accomplish by having this conversation
Shift your stance to support learning, sharing, and problem solving

• Deciding:

Is this the best way to address the issue and achieve your purpose? (e.g., home visit)
What are the risks of raising the issue?

A Difficult Conversation Worksheet

1. Describe the problem as the difference between your stories. Include both viewpoints as a legitimate part of the story.
2. Share your purposes
3. Invite them to join you as a partner in sorting out the situation together

A Difficult Conversation Worksheet

- **Listen to understand** their perspective on what happened. Ask questions. Acknowledge the feelings behind the arguments and accusations. Paraphrase.
Try to unravel how you arrive at this place.
- **Share your own viewpoint.** Your past experience, intentions, feelings
- **Reframe, Reframe, Reframe** to keep on track. From truth to perceptions, blame to contribution, accusations to feelings

A Difficult Conversation Worksheet

- Invent **Options** that meet each side's most important concerns and interests
- Look to **standards** for what should happen. Keep in mind a standard of mutual caring:
- Talk about how to keep **communication** open as you go forward

Denial:

- Don't argue or try to prove them wrong!
- It is only through establishing trust and convincing the parents that you do have the interest of their child at heart that a door or window may open and acceptance will take the place of denial.
- Be patient and supportive. Ultimately, it is your continued support and caring even in the face of disagreement that will help bring the parent closer to accepting "what is."

When you're stuck

- Focus on common interests

Finding the Interests

Question, question, question...

- "What makes that solution so important for you?"
- "What would you accomplish in getting what you want?"
- "What if that did/didn't happen?"
- "How will you be affected by...?"
- "Imagine that you got _____; what would be taken care of?"

Finding the Interests

- What need is the person taking this position attempting to satisfy?
- What is motivating the person?
- What is the person trying to accomplish?
- What is the person afraid will happen if a demand is not fulfilled?

What is an “Interest”?

An interest is usually related to the core of an individual's personal well-being or an organization's purpose. Interests, may fall in the following categories:

Concerns	Hopes
Expectations	Aspirations
Priorities	Beliefs
Fears	Values

Interest-Based Negotiation

Process used to resolve disputes by identifying and satisfying the underlying needs of all the parties involved.



Tips and Suggestions

- A successful outcome will depend on two things: how you are and what you say. How you are (centered, supportive, curious, problem-solving) will greatly influence what you say.
- Acknowledge emotional energy – yours and theirs – and direct it towards a useful purpose.
- Know and return to your purpose at difficult moments.
- Don't take verbal attacks personally. Help your opponent/partner come back to center.
- Don't assume they can see things from your point of view.
- Practice the conversation with a friend before holding the real one.
- Mentally practice the conversation. See various possibilities and visualize yourself handling them with ease. Envision the outcome you're hoping for.

Replacement Skills Pair Share

- What steps do you feel could be made to get your staff involved in learning conversations?

Consequence Strategies Responding to Challenging



"Timmy, get the door ... this parent-teacher conference is over."

CONSEQUENCE STRATEGIES FOR FAMILY

- Establish a collaborative plan placed on the function of CHILD'S behavior
- Agree on Action Plan (i.e., who will do what, when, and where)
- How will plan be evaluated?
- How will progress be communicated?
- Who is the communication person?

WHEN THINGS ARE FALLING APART....





Certain Responses Have a High Risk of...

- Derailing the conversation
- Taking the focus off the other
- Blocking the other from finding a solution
- Lowering the other's self-esteem
- Distancing your self from the other
- Diminishing the other's motivation

High Risk Responses

Sending Solutions

- Ordering
- Threatening
- Moralizing
- Advising
- Logically Arguing
- Questioning

Evaluating

- Judging
- Praising
- Diagnosing
- Name-Calling

Withdrawing

- Reassuring
- Diverting

Takes the focus off the other person

Ending an Unproductive Conversation

- Know when to cut your losses, perhaps saying, "let me try to find out more about the situation and let's schedule a time to talk (or meet) next week."
- Interrupt venting to say, "It is important I know how you feel about this but I only have about five more minutes. What would be the most productive way for us to end this conversation?"
- Go back to the original topic, "I hear that you have many concerns you want me to know about, I will follow up with _____ and perhaps you could put the rest of your concerns in writing for me?"

Three Possible End Points

- **Consensus**
 - Everyone comes to an agreement on what the problem is and how to approach solving it
- **Compromise**
 - Both or all parties agree to some of the provisions of what the problem is and how to handle it
 - Everyone works in the spirit of cooperation on solving the problem
- **Confrontation-Capitulation**
 - If parties cannot agree on what the problem is, how to solve it or both and they cannot find a compromise the end result is confrontation, capitulation or both.
 - This may lead to a placement or class assignment change, legal action or further administrative involvement

CALM

Basic calming techniques

- Deep breathing encourages others to pattern your breathing – calms you and others
- Think of a Happy Place (what you will do when you get home)
- Use a quieter, inside voice

Knowledge of precipitating factors will

Understand that:

1. We are not always the cause of angry or resistant behavior from parents.
2. Parents can be angry for many reasons; only some may be related to or caused by the school or teachers.
3. Avoid becoming a precipitating factor.
If you are not able to rationally detach from a potential crisis situation, you become a part of the problem.

Adaptive distancing or rational detachment

- This is the ability to stay in control of one's own behavior and not take the angry behavior of others personally.
- You may not be able to control angry individuals, but you can control your own response to the behaviors that result.
- Maintain a professional attitude so that you can stay in control.
- Don't become burned out by angry or unreasonable parents.

Always model respect

- Stay calm
- Speak respectfully
- Use the lowest volume of voice as possible
- Use a neutral tone of voice
- Show limited emotion



De-escalate cont.

Review ground rules

- If participants are beginning to become angry or upset take the cue to review the ground rules.
- "Let's take a moment to review the meeting ground rules."
- "We've had a spirited discussion. So everyone feels they can contribute, let's review the ground rules."



De-escalate cont.

Keep Your Emotions Under Control

- Avoid responding to baiting comments or accusations.
- If you lose control the other person takes it.
- Don't become defensive about questions (assume question is to get information).
- Take deep rhythmic breaths.

De-escalate cont.

Take a Break

- "We have been discussing these issues for quite a while; let's take a 10-minute break and we will reconvene."
- A break is also useful if parent is becoming emotional (crying).

Use De-escalation Phrases

Confrontational language

Confrontational language has the following characteristics or sends the message that: you are absolutely certain you are right; you are unwilling to consider the other person's position; it challenges the other person to back up what they say; has a harsh, confrontational tone; and tends to blame the other person.

Cooperative language

Cooperative language sends different messages: messages such as: you are willing to consider other person's position; you recognize you **COULD** be wrong; it invites the person to discuss rather than challenges; has a milder, cooperative tone; leaves room for choice; tends to blame nobody.

Parent says they did not get notice of a meeting:

Confrontational language:

That's impossible. We always send out this information to all parents. Did you throw it out?

Cooperative language:

It's odd you didn't receive the information. We usually send out this information to parents. Perhaps it's just gotten lost somewhere. I'll send another copy.

Use of "we"

- Replacing the words "you" or "I" with WE can give the impression you are on the same side as the parent. It suggests cooperation.
- Be careful not to overuse "We" in a conversation.
- "Well, Sir, we need to sign our children's report cards and send them back." This sounds patronizing, and sounds like we are speaking to a child.

Instead say,

- "There seems to be a problem with getting these report cards signed. Perhaps we can work together to figure out how to get this done. What do you think?"
- Other examples include "I guess we better take a look at that." "Let's see what we can do about that."

Use the "Please don't talk to me that way" intervention

- Useful for the person who is using profanity, insults, or aggressive nasty language that is directed at you or another team member.

"Mrs. Smith, please don't talk to me like that. I will never speak to you like that, and I will never speak to your son (or daughter) like that."

Sometimes people need to vent and it can be beneficial to be there to listen.

End the meeting if necessary

- We will need to reschedule the meeting at another time.
- Ending the meeting can give the critical message: What you are doing isn't going to work with me. I will not be bullied, suckered into stupid arguments, insulted or give you the satisfaction of reacting to the abuse.
- Aggressive, abusive and manipulative people look for victims they can control, using a variety of confrontation-provoking behaviors.
- Once aggressive people realize that they aren't going to be able to control you (make you angry or upset), they are less likely to use this behavior in an attempt to get their way.

Teachers and Administrators

- The best way to have the last word is to apologize. Apologizing is one of the best ways to diffuse a situation.
- You do not need to assume responsibility for the situation (if you truly are not responsible)
"I am sorry that happened."

THE TOP TEN THINGS NOT TO SAY TO A PARENT



The Top 10 Things not to Say to a Parent

10. When I get sick of him/when he's making me crazy/when I can't handle him anymore, I
9. We need to give him an EA on his IEP for EBD support at RRN.
8. That's not my job.
7. If they don't qualify for special education, there is nothing I can do.
6. We don't have the resources to do that (money, staff, etc.).

The Top 10 Things not to Say to a Parent

5. He/she is doing this because...
 - he doesn't like math
 - he doesn't like me
 - he wants attention, etc.
4. I'm here to teach, not babysit.
3. Everyone is treated the same in my classroom.
2. I have 30 students in my class, I have to teach to the middle.
1. Your child isn't trying/isn't motivated.

So how did it go?

- The art of debriefing

CONSEQUENCE STRATEGIES FOR STAFF

- Debrief the meeting
- How did we do with listening?
- How would we describe their story?
- What would describe our impact?
- What are common interests?
- Where do we go from here?

Consequence Strategies Pair Share

- **What steps do you feel could be made to get your staff to debrief, problem solve, and plan for subsequent challenging meetings, and/or move forward with less difficulty?**

Strategies for Types of Challenging Parents



Strategies for Four Common Types of Difficult People

- **OPENLY AGGRESSIVE PEOPLE:**
 - Stand up to them, but don't fight.
 - They will expect you to either run away from them or react with rage. Your goal is simply to assertively express your own views, not try to win a battle of right or wrong.
 - First, wait for the person to run out of steam.
 - Then call the person by name and assert your own opinions with confidence.



Four Common Types



▪ SNIPERS:

- Snipers are experts at taking potshots in subtle ways, such as humorous putdowns, sarcasm, disapproving looks and innuendoes.
- You may feel uncomfortable replying to them because you don't like confrontation.
- Respond to a sniper with a question. "That sounds like you're making fun of me. Are you?" A sniper usually replies with denial. "I'm only joking."
- This will reduce the chance for similar attacks in the future.

Four Common Types



▪ COMPLAINERS:

- These are fearful people who have little faith in themselves and others because they believe in a hostile world.
- Their constant discouragement and complaining can bring everyone to despair.
- Don't try to argue these difficult people out of their negativity.
- Instead, respond with your own optimistic expectations.

Four Common Types



▪ SILENT PEOPLE:

- People who ignore you, give you sullen looks and respond to every question with silence are difficult because they're timid.
- Ask them questions that cannot be answered with just a yes/no, such as "Tell me your concerns."
- Then wait at least one full minute before you say anything. The long silence may make them uncomfortable enough to say something. If they do start talking, listen carefully.

Difficult Behavior and Challenging Positions

- Some Types of Difficult Behavior
 - Complaining and Negativism
 - Bullying
 - The Silent Treatment
 - Knowing It All
 - Passive-Aggressive
- Difficult Parent Positions
 - Clingy Parents
 - The no show
 - Activism without cause
 - What else in your experience?

Complaining and Negativism

- He or she
 - May shoot down every idea and view everything through a negative lens
 - May complain constantly about their child, even when child is doing well or is present
 - May constantly complain about you or the school system
 - Will seem to only want to complain with no interest in solutions
 - May have a bark that is worse than the bite
- Why does he or she acts like this
 - May have no sense of power or no desire for power – may actually be very passive
 - May be worn down, depressed or tired and have no supports or not know how to use supports
 - May honestly not know what to do

Complaining and Negativity

- What to do
 - Listen first, fact find together if you can
 - Beat them to the punch, bring up the negatives yourself first and dismis one by one with logic and data
 - Stay positive, but realistic – don't make promises
 - Turn negative questions over to the entire group
 - Stick to the facts, don't offer opinions if possible
 - Give them power, "How do you want us to solve this?" (especially if they are shooting down every solution)
 - Insist on a problem solving approach
 - Try find a solution without accepting or placing blame
 - Ask what results they would like the conversation to end in – you may just agree with the answer
- Example: "Montana says you let all the other kids play a game during recess and she had to do math... She says that she didn't know she had to finish her class work if she wanted to play the game."

Bullying

- He or she
 - May believe that he or she always right, no matter what.
 - May demean those who disagree with him or her, sometimes obviously, sometimes subtly.
 - May insist on getting his or her own way.
- Why he or she acts like that
 - Need to prove him or herself, may come from low self-esteem
 - Dislike of weakness
 - Sense of entitlement

Bullying (Continued)

- What to do
 - You may feel personally and/or professionally attacked – don't take it personally
 - Do not engage in argument because the Bully will win, he or she has more practice
 - Address them by name
 - Assertively express your opinion without negating his or her opinion if possible
 - Some experts suggest interrupting rants with a distraction
 - Be ready to make friendly overtures if you gain his or her respect
- Example: "Johnny WILL bring his MP3 player to class! It helps him learn!"

The Silent Treatment

- He or she may act
 - Silent
 - Passive-Aggressive
 - Apathetic
 - Not follow through
- Why is he or she behaves like that
 - Possibilities include inability to express fear, rage or other intense emotion and/or apathy
- What to do
 - Ask open ended questions
 - Make silence your friend and use a friendly, anticipating gaze during the silence
 - Avoid power struggles
 - Comment on the interaction between you or the body language of the individual
- "Do you have any questions about the IEP Mrs. Jones?" No reply. "Is there any you would like us to add, Mrs. Jones?" "I guess not." She says.

Knowing It All

- How he or she behaves
 - These parents are experts. Not only on their own child, but also on everything else from curriculum to pedagogy and beyond.
 - They may seem condescending and arrogant
- Why he or she acts like that
 - They believe knowledge is power and feel more secure when they are "in the know"
 - May like to show off/like attention
 - They fear being wrong or out-of-control

Know it All

- What to do
 - Be ready, know your facts, do not try to "fake it"
 - Build off of the knowledge they espouse
 - Praise their knowledge and hard work learning the information, that may be all they need to calm down
 - Present alternative views without telling them they are wrong only as a additional source of information
 - Respect their opinions and listen empathetically
 - If you need to correct their information consider doing it through firm questioning

Parents with Mental Illness

- Approximately 1 in 4 Americans will suffer from some form of mental illness at some point in their life
- Most of this 25% of adults will have mild or short lived illness
- A smaller number may have longer term or more serious mental illness requiring more intensive treatment
- Any level of mental illness can impair ability to parent, but with proper support and intervention parents with mental illness can do an excellent job
- A parent with untreated or active mental illness may be inconsistent, have mood swings, be unable to participate in their child's education or have other symptoms
- The same advice applies to situations that require working with a parent who has mental illness (follow the golden rule, be respectful, listen, be empathic, set limits, etc.)

Passive-Aggressive

How he or she may act

- Sarcastic, jokes at others expense
- Potshots and indirect criticism
- Criticism by comparison
- Does not follow through with commitments

Why he or she behaves that way

- Afraid of direct conflict
- Not empowered to share opinions in another way
- Depressed, low-self esteem and doesn't know another way to interact

What to do

- Keep bring discussion back to issues instead of personalities
- Refuse to allow sarcasm by kindly asking it be discontinued
- Get commitments in writing

The Clinger

- Views child as delicate or in need of constant assistance
- Hoovers around and clings to the child
- Does not want the child to take risks or face challenges
- The child is a primary source of their self worth
- Attempt to allay fears with information and examples – show them what the child can do

The Clinger (Continued)

- Be personal and caring, but a role model of confidence in yourself and the child
- Try to avoid allowing them to over-engage or redirect attempts to control you or the child by giving other assignments if they insist on volunteering
- Example: "Robbie (age nine) cannot do all of the work you assign. It will take him too long and he needs time to relax and just be a kid. He's just a little boy. You need to give him less work."

The Activist

- Favorite statement is, "That's not fair."
- Insists you, the school, the district, the American education system and possible the entire world is unjust towards his or her child.
- May like to bring up lawyers.
- Example: "Sarah is allergic to bees, she cannot possibly go on a trip to that farm! If she can't go then the whole class shouldn't go! She will feel left out and it isn't fair!"

The No Show

- The no show – this child's parents think he or she has better things to do than school. Things like sleeping in, going shopping, going on a trip and sometimes even actually important things like the dentist, orthodontist or allergy shots. The parent insists you make allowances because it is no the child's decision, even if the child is in high school.
- Example: "It is hard for Melissa to wake up in the morning, I don't see why you have to be so hard on her for being 30 or 45 minutes late."
- Example: "We are going on vacation in two weeks. It is cheaper to fly in March, you know. I need you to make a packet of Jim's work for him so he won't get behind."

Cultural Competence

Cultural Competence and Diversity

- Some individuals do not welcome involvement of government
- Some cultures defer to professionals
- Families might not understand mainstream Western beliefs about "parent-educator partnerships."

Cultural Competence and Diversity

- Understand the role of age, gender and other individual differences that affect or define status, relationships and socially acceptable behavior
- Provide ongoing training and support for all mediators in diversity, cultural competence, flexibility

Cultural Competence and Diversity

- Ensure that interpreter training includes the critical element of translating in a neutral manner
- Provide interpreters a dictionary of disability and dispute resolution terms.
- Modify materials and processes to respond to individual circumstances

Cultural Competence and Diversity

- Determine what method of communication (e.g., in-person, face-to-face, etc.) is most appropriate
- Be aware of personal biases and assumptions based on how a person dresses, speaks, acts, etc
- Insist that mediators have no perceived and/or real conflicts of interest

Cultural Competence and Diversity

- Recognize that many people do not communicate in a linear fashion nor "stick to the subject at hand."
- Avoid language or assumptions that perpetuate stereotypes.
- Engage community leaders and cultural liaisons in outreach and model definition

Cultural Competence and Diversity

- Arrange the room and seat the participants in a manner appropriate to the participants and their relationships.
- Permit joint and individual meetings as appropriate for saving face, venting, consultation with advisors

Cultural Awareness

"Most teachers, a largely white middle-class population, complete their education unprepared to communicate with parents or understand and empathize with children from families that are different from their own."

Cultural Awareness

- Vignette

The Research on Parent and Teacher Perceptions



What do you think?

Williams (1992) found:

- 86.8 % of teachers believed they needed parent-involvement training
- 92.1 % of principals believed they needed parent-involvement training



What do you think?

Harris & Associates (1987) found:

- 75 % of the teachers wanted parent involvement
- 74 % of the parents said they wanted to be involved



Teacher-Parent Relationships

- MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: An Examination of School Leadership (2005)
 - 9 of 10 new teachers say it is "very important to work with parents when educating their children..."
 - 1 of 4 teachers finds working with parents "very satisfying"
 - **7 of 10 parents see their child's teachers as "adversaries"**

Teachers

- Your communication style influences parents' ability and eagerness to be involved. Giving first hand information helps stifle the school-community grapevine

Understanding Parents of Children with Disabilities

What parents want the teachers to know:

- My child is a person
- You set the stage for how others will treat him
- Your efforts to learn about his interests validates him
- The disability is only part of who she is
- Understanding the disability may affect how you perceive her
- My child can learn
- My child has gifts
- We can talk
- I am an expert when it come to my child and I will be a part of her life forever.

INTERVIEWS OF PARENTS

WHAT IS THEIR STORY?

WHAT WAS THEIR INTENT?

WHAT WERE THEIR ASSUMPTIONS?

CAN YOU PROVIDE A "THIRD STORY" ?

WHY DO YOU THINK THEY FELT SOME ADMINISTRATORS/TEACHERS WERE MORE TRUSTWORTHY, AND WILLING TO RESPOND TO THEIR CONCERNS?

Interview

- Parent One

INTERVIEWS OR PARENTS

WHAT IS THEIR STORY?

WHAT WAS THEIR INTENT?

WHY WERE THEIR ASSUMPTIONS?

CAN YOU PROVIDE A "THIRD STORY" ?

**WHY DO YOU THINK THEY FELT SOME ADMINISTRATORS/
TEACHERS WERE MORE TRUSTWORTHY, AND WILLING TO
RESPOND TO THEIR CONCERNS?**

Interview

- Parent #2

INTERVIEWS OR PARENTS

WHAT IS THEIR STORY?

WHAT WAS THEIR INTENT?

WHY WERE THEIR ASSUMPTIONS?

CAN YOU PROVIDE A "THIRD STORY" ?

**WHY DO YOU THINK THEY FELT SOME ADMINISTRATORS/
TEACHERS WERE MORE TRUSTWORTHY, AND WILLING TO
RESPOND TO THEIR CONCERNS?**

Interview

■ Parent #3

INTERVIEWS OR PARENTS

WHAT IS THEIR STORY?

WHAT WAS THEIR INTENT?

WHY WERE THEIR ASSUMPTIONS?

CAN YOU PROVIDE A "THIRD STORY" ?

**WHY DO YOU THINK THEY FELT SOME ADMINISTRATORS/
TEACHERS WERE MORE TRUSTWORTHY, AND WILLING TO
RESPOND TO THEIR CONCERNS?**

Interview

- Administrator

Dialogue is the most effective way of resolving conflict.

AND REALLY LISTENING IS THE FOUNDATION!!!

Thank you for being here and for all your efforts with challenging families

- Feel free to contact me if you have questions or would like support on this topic.
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- Continue to make a difference!!
