

**WELCOME TO
CVESD PARENT LEADERSHIP
SERIES MODULE 4!**

**WE WILL BEGIN SHORTLY,
IN THE MEANTIME, PLEASE
TAKE THIS BRIEF SURVEY
USING THE QR CODE.**

THANK YOU!





PARENT LEADERSHIP SERIES



Module 4

Getting it Done:

How to be a “Super” Communicator and Problem-Solver

Beatrice G. Fernández and Jeana Preston

WEEAC Consultants

Tuesday, October 26, 2021

Speaker/Introduction to
the work of the
Western Educational
Equity Assistance
Center
WEEAC-Region IV

- We are one of four regional Equity Assistance Centers funded by the United States Department of Education **authorized** under the Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- Promote equitable educational opportunities in the area of Race, National Origin, Gender, Religion, and other aspects of K-12 Education
- Services are Free or at low cost



Western Educational **EQUITY** Assistance Center

**Frances B. Miller, Principal Analyst
Western Education Equity Assistance Center
Metropolitan State University of Denver**



CHAPMAN

"We know that communication is a problem, but the company is not going to discuss it with the employees."

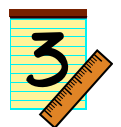
Agenda



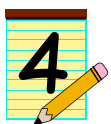
Welcome and Introductions



Overview



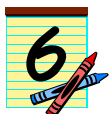
Why Being a Skilled Communicator Matters



Understanding and Managing Our Own Communication



How to solve Problems One-On-One



How to Help Groups Solve Problems



Resources for Parent Leaders at Home

THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS EPSTEIN'S 6 TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT + TYPE 7 (XO)



TYPE 1 – PARENTING

TYPE 2 – COMMUNICATING

TYPE 3 – VOLUNTEERING AND PARTICIPATING

TYPE 4 – LEARNING AT HOME

TYPE 5 – DECISION MAKING AND ADVOCACY

TYPE 6 – CONNECTING

TYPE 7 (XO) – RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Dr. Joyce Epstein of The Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning, Johns Hopkins University, developed the 6 Types framework for categorizing types of parent involvement found at effective schools.

TYPES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT



Type 5



Decision Making and Advocacy

Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, advocacy through PTAs or PTOs, school councils, committees, and other parent organizations.

- Awareness of parent perspective as a factor in policy development and decisions
- Principals must overcome barriers that prevent parents from getting involved
- View of equal status of family representatives on committees and in leadership roles
- Shared experiences and connections with families

(Henderson & Mapp)

Personal Learning Shift for Leaders

	Going From 	 Toward
1	Being silent	Being more open with others
2	Being defensive	Accepting feedback from others
3	Being rigid	Being flexible
4	Stuck in TTWWADI* mode <i>(That's the way we've always done it.)</i>	Finding creative solutions
5	Avoiding conflict	Being a problem solver
6	Being suspicious	Listening to understand
7	Being overly critical	Assuming the best of others
8	Unaware of group process	Contributing to group goals/actions
9	Guarding information	Sharing information and resources
10	Being destructive (fighting) and focused on adults want	Being constructive (helping) and focused on what students need



NO MUD

NO LOTUS



The Lotus flower is a symbol of strength and new beginnings across many cultures.

It is a sign of encouragement for people struggling in their everyday lives.

Even though its roots grow in very muddy waters, the Lotus produces a most beautiful flower.



**The way we communicate with others
and with ourselves ultimately determines
the quality of our lives.**

**— Anthony Robbins: Motivational
speaker and author**

The “Speak Friendly” Strategy

Attitude is the engine that drives all actions



- **Speak Friendly Strategy**
Translates across all dialects & reduces barriers
- **Smile**
It reflects on your face and in your voice
- **Listen Actively**
Feel what the individuals are trying to communicate
- **Focus**
Keep the individual you are speaking with the focus of your thoughts

Activity in Pairs

Try and figure out how many different meanings can be given to the sentences below, depending upon how they are said.

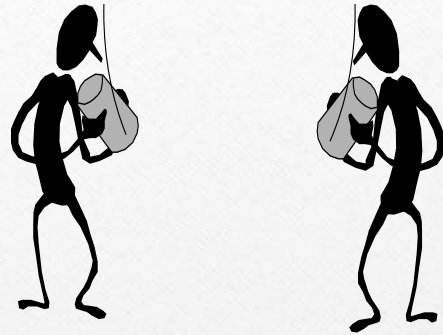
- **Sentence #1:** *This is my friend Michael.*
- **Sentence # 2:** *When are you coming home?*
- **Sentence # 3:** *What's wrong?*
- **Sentence # 4:** *Real nice job, Sam.*





**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

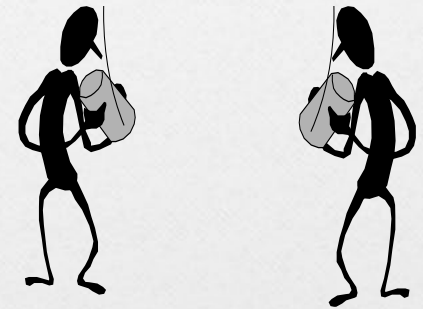


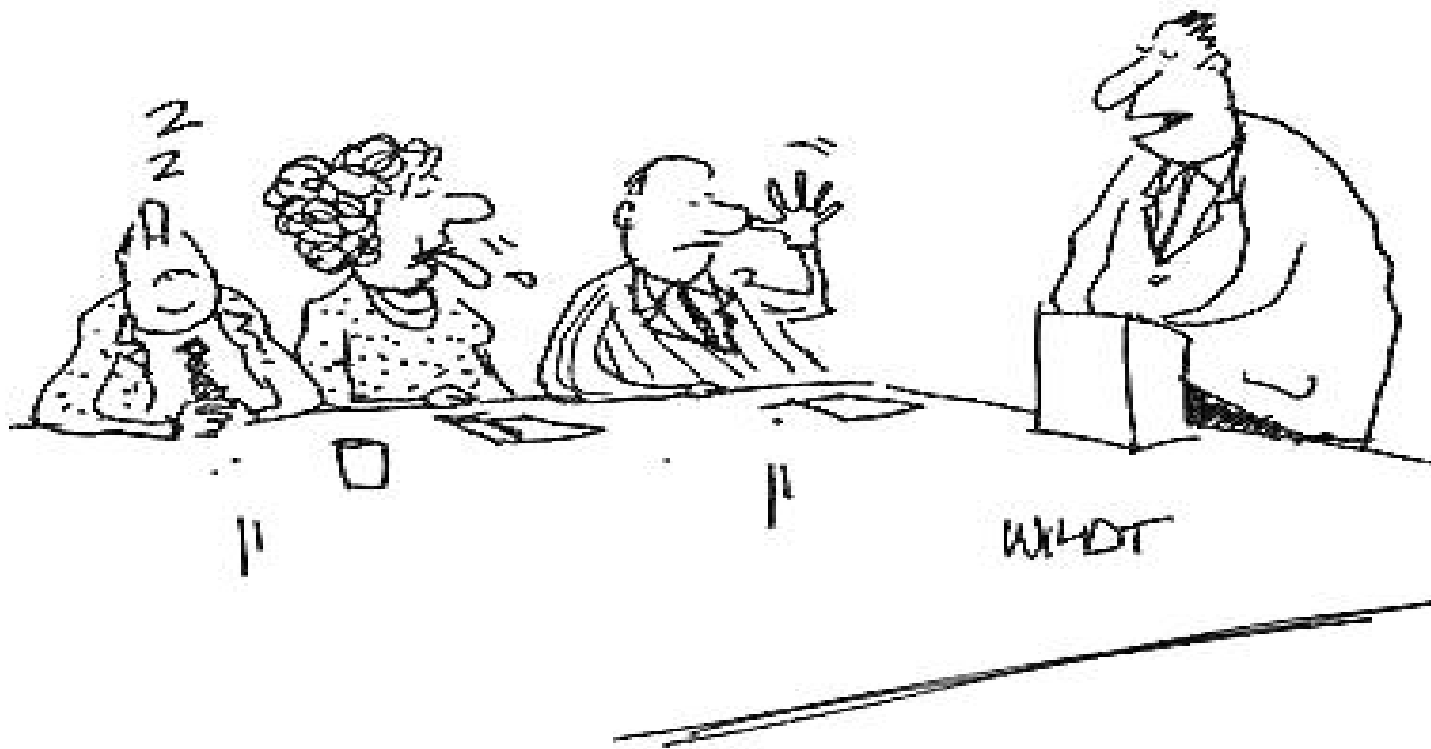
MANAGING COMMUNICATION

Communication is the sharing or exchange of information between two or more people, and includes both verbal and nonverbal components.

Verbal Communication

- What I *mean* is filtered through my personal experience and knowledge. It is then translated into what I say. This is called “encoding.”
- What I say travels through the air and is heard by the listener.
- What my listener hears is translated into what my listener understands, filtered through the listener’s personal experience and knowledge (as well as any distractions in the environment.) This is called “decoding.”
- Communication may not be complete without feedback to ensure both the speaker and the listener understand each other —ask clarifying questions.





“This concludes my lecture on non-verbal communication. Any questions?”

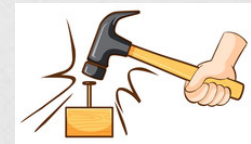
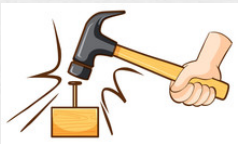
Nonverbal Communication



- Facial expressions, posture, gestures of the hands, movement of the body, eye contact, and silence (accounts for 50-95% of actual communication).



**If the only tool you
have in your toolbox is
a hammer, then you
had better hope every
problem looks like a
nail.**

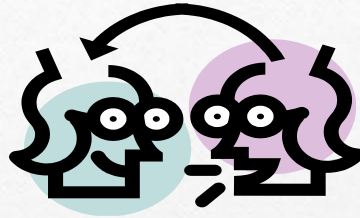


CONDUCTING PROBLEM SOLVING CONVERSATIONS

Think about how you handle potentially stressful conversations. Here are some Communication Tips to consider:

- We are all faced with problems—small and large ones—everyday. It helps to use an organized approach to solve problems and to take the emotion out of the situation.
- Each of us has our own comfort level when it comes to handling conflict. Some people are OK with high levels of conflict but most of us hope problems will just go away!
- Use empathy when you approach someone to solve a problem. How you would want to be treated if you were in this person's shoes?
- Be direct with respect. Your communication can be to the point and honest—but always try to preserve the dignity of the other person.
- When solving problems use the phrase, “Would it be possible . . . ?” This is a neutral way to suggest a solution.

CONDUCTING PROBLEM SOLVING CONVERSATIONS



STEP 1	Be Specific	“When this happens . . .”
STEP 2	Don’t exaggerate, use appropriate emotion	“I feel concerned . . .”
STEP 3	Non-Debatable—State the problem clearly	“Because”
STEP 4	Follow up with an Open-Ended Question to seek resolution	“How can we make this better?” Or “How can we keep this from happening in the future?”

SCRIPT FOR PROBLEM SOLVING



PLAYERS:

Amanda—DAC representative and very active parent at Jennifer Lopez Elementary School who is involved in many school committees, PTA, and soccer booster club

Itzell—new parent at the school and the DAC Alternate Representative who was recruited by Amanda

SCRIPT FOR PROBLEM SOLVING



PROBLEM:

Itzell volunteered to be the DAC alternate representative when Amanda asked her because it seemed like a good way to help without interfering too much with her full-time job.

Amanda, the DAC representative, attended the first monthly meeting of the year but for the next 2 meetings she called Itzell and asked her if she could attend—once because her child was not well and the next time because she had a schedule conflict.

SCRIPT FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

PROBLEM . . .



Each time she asked Itzell the day before the meeting and Itzell had to arrange time off from work with short notice to attend because she wanted the school to have a parent representative at the DAC meeting. She takes her role seriously but did not expect to have to attend every month. Now it's the day before the 4th meeting and Itzell has noticed a text message from Amanda saying, "Please call me—I need a favor."

SCRIPT FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

PROBLEM . . .



HOW CAN ITZELL HANDLE THIS?

Is Amanda calling her to attend the DAC meeting in her place again? If she just says she can't go—Amanda may call her again next month with the same request and the school will not have a parent representative in attendance at this meeting. But if she says yes--and if her supervisor does approve the time off again with short notice—Itzell knows she will have no time to plan how to get her work done.

SCRIPT FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

PLAYERS: 2 Volunteers



Amanda—DAC representative and very active parent at Jennifer Lopez Elementary School who is involved in many school committees, PTA, and soccer booster club

Itzell—new parent at the school and the DAC Alternate Representative who was recruited by Amanda

SCRIPT FOR PROBLEM SOLVING



Itzell: *Hi Amanda—I got the message to call you—what’s up?*

Amanda: *Thanks! The DAC meeting is tomorrow and I have a booster club meeting at school. I would get to the DAC meeting sort of late. Can you go?*

Itzell: *Wow. When I get late notice like this it is not easy for me to get time off from work approved and I like going but I didn’t expect to attend DAC meetings so often.*

SCRIPT FOR PROBLEM SOLVING



Amanda: *I know but I am just doing so much for the school and I have a lot of meetings. And now the treasurer of our PTA quit so I am going to be doing that job also. This DAC meeting includes discussion about school budget cuts and the principal really wants a parent rep to attend.*

Itzell: *I feel really concerned because when I get late notice like this I might not be able to attend and there might be no parent there to represent parents at our school. How can we make sure someone attends tomorrow and how can we keep this situation from happening again every month?*

SCRIPT FOR PROBLEM SOLVING



Amanda: *Oh—I didn't know your work schedule was such a problem because you didn't mention it when I asked you to attend before. I haven't really had time to even get DAC meetings written on my calendar this year and so they just sneak up on me and then I'm already booked with something else.*

Itzell: *It sounds like you are saying you have a lot on your plate.*

SCRIPT FOR PROBLEM SOLVING



Amanda: *Because it's short notice for you again I will ask someone to run the booster club meeting and I will go to the DAC meeting tomorrow. I will talk with the principal and suggest that someone else be appointed as the DAC rep after this meeting and see what the process is. Are you interested in being nominated or do you want to remain the alternate rep?*

Itzell: *Hmmmm. Since I can plan ahead for meetings I would like to be considered. Let's stay in touch about it.*

Amanda: *Great—have to run—I have a Halloween Carnival planning meeting now . . .*

THE END

PROBLEM SOLVING CONVERSATION



STEP 1	Be Specific	"When I get late notice like this it is not easy for me to get time off . . ."
STEP 2	Don't exaggerate, use appropriate emotion	"I feel concerned . . ."
STEP 3	Non-Debatable—State the problem clearly	"Because no parent might be there . . ."
STEP 4	Follow up with an Open-Ended Question to seek resolution	"How can we keep this situation from happening again?"

PROBLEM SOLVING CONVERSATION



Questions

- **Will this solution work? Why or Why not?**
- **Any other thoughts?**

Tips for Dealing with Upset or Angry People

- **Often our first reactions are not the most effective for diffusing a hostile situation.**
- **You do not have to attend every fight you are invited to.**
- **He who angers you, conquers you. —Old Saying**



Tips for Dealing with Upset or Angry People

Do:

1. Evaluate the threat level. Remain calm.
2. If possible, ask the person to sit down and talk.
3. Listen to understand.
4. Ask clarifying questions.
5. As they speak louder, you speak softer.
6. Ask the person for their suggestions for solving the problem.
7. Next, tell them your suggestions.
8. Look for a resolution that combines “my way” and “your way” in order to see a “new way” forward.



Tips for Dealing with Upset or Angry People

Don't

1. Argue or place blame.
2. Raise your voice.
3. Defend or become defensive.
4. Promise things you can't produce.
5. Own problems that belong to others.
6. Belittle or minimize the problem.
7. Bring up other topics of concern.
8. Threaten action that you can't follow through with or is not reasonable for the situation.



DONT'S

How Does a Group Problem Solving Process Work?

- Sometimes, situations occur that cannot be handled automatically and require a more thoughtful approach.
- For these situations, using a problem-solving tool can help you resolve them in a systematic way.



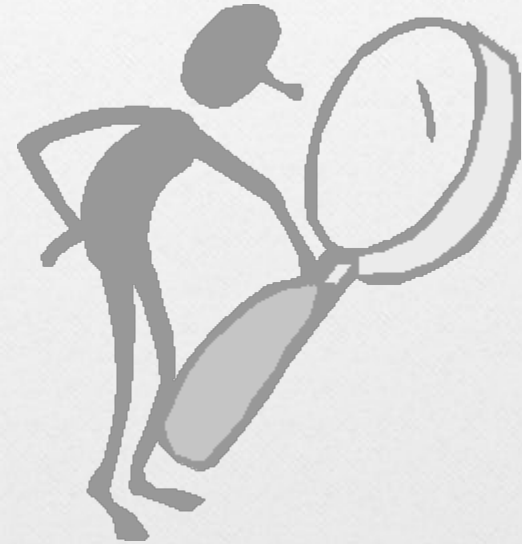


**If you criticize a system, be equally
ready to offer assistance
to improve it.**

—Armando Sanchez, Filipino Politician (1952-2010)

How Does a Group Problem Solving Process Work?

- Each step helps you clarify the situation and think about possible solutions.
- It is helpful to write down information so that you can see how each of the steps help move you toward a solution.



Problem-Solving Model

Step 1



Identify the problem

- What is the problem?



Step 2

Analyze the problem

- What do we know about the problem?
- What other info do we need?

Step 6

Evaluate Effectiveness

- Do we have our desired results?
- Did the solution satisfy the needs of the person/s with the problem?
- Are there still things not correct/satisfactory?
(Back to step #1 !)



Step 5

List steps to take

- What steps do we need to take according to the top solution?
- What is our timeline for it to work (right away? One month? Or?)



Step 3

Brainstorm ideas

- List all possible ideas/solutions
- Do not judge them

Step 4

Prioritize ideas

- Discuss pros & cons of each idea/solution listed
- How likely is each one to help you resolve the problem?
- Choose top 3 you think will work best



Problem-Solving Model



Step 1



Step 6

Step 2



Step 5

Step 3



Step 4



GROUP PROBLEM-SOLVING SCENARIO



PROBLEM:

- The principal of LegoLand Elementary School has worked hard over her 7 years with parent leaders to build good relationships with families and make sure there were lots of great opportunities for them to support their children's success.
- Last year, students could only attend school virtually which also meant there were no in-person family activities and all committees/councils and PTA meetings were held virtually.

GROUP PROBLEM-SOLVING SCENARIO



PROBLEM:

- The usual opportunity at Open House night for parents to sign up to volunteer for activities and committees/councils/PTA did not happen. The numbers of families participating in any virtual activities or meetings last year was disappointingly low.
- Even with students back at school this year, parent participation in school activities (still held virtually) has not improved. For example: No one has agreed to be nominated for chair of the ELAC, the PTA board has vacancies, and only a few parents have volunteered to help plan the school's yearly Science Fair.

GROUP PROBLEM-SOLVING SCENARIO



PROBLEM

- The principal has asked some parent leaders to meet with her and a teacher representative to discuss some ideas to engage more families with the school.
- Considering this continued virtual reality—*what can they do?*

PLAYERS:

Principal—Frances Miller

PTA President—

SSC Chair—

First Grade Teacher—

ELAC Member—

SCRIPT:



Principal: *Thanks for attending this virtual meeting. As I explained in my email I really want to brainstorm with you some ideas for rebuilding connections with our families since it seems we will need to do everything virtually again this year. (She sighs . . .)*

SSC Chair: *Yes, we are going to have to think differently about our outreach efforts to parents. Would it be OK with everyone if we use a problem solving handout I got at a district training to keep track of our ideas?*

*(Group members nod yes and handout is put on the screen.
The principal agrees to take notes.)*

SCRIPT:



First Grade Teacher: *I like this handout—it will make it easier for me to take info back and share with the other teachers, and get them on board with our suggestions.*

ELAC Member: *It looks like we can agree on Step 1—we need to rebuild our relationships with families in ways that will be more effective in our “virtual reality.” The ELAC is still missing a chairperson!*

Principal: *If everyone agrees I will put that statement in the Step 1 box.*

(Group nods agreement.)

SCRIPT:



PTA President: *For Step 2 we have a lot of evidence—our membership is down, there are vacancies on the PTA board, and the Science Fair committee has only 2 volunteers right now. We always counted on having sign-up tables at Open House so parents could volunteer for activities through the year but it was all virtual this year.*

ELAC Member: *ELAC and SSC also had tables at Open House to recruit parents to be on our groups. ELAC meeting attendance numbers are still down this year.*

First Grade Teacher: *The principal already shared with teachers that the virtual Open House attendance was much less than in past years.*

SCRIPT:



SSC Chair: *Let's get to Step 3 and brainstorm some solutions together. After everyone's ideas are listed—we can discuss them each and then let's choose our top 3 that we agree have the best chance of working to help solve this problem.*

(The group does this and then moves to Step 4 and generates this list with their top three ideas noted below as well as next steps and a time line for each one.)

Principal: *PTA President, could you please read the first idea? Thank you.*

SCRIPT:



PTA President: *Of course.*

1) *The principal will appoint an ad hoc committee to include representatives from all committees/councils, PTA, and teachers, to develop a “Support Our Students (SOS)” campaign. The goal will be to communicate to families how important it is for them to contribute to their children’s education at home and at school. A listing of all the ways to do this through attending upcoming virtual events, serving on school groups, and joining PTA will be sent to all parents.*

Principal: *ELAC Chair, could you please read the second and third ideas?
Thank you.*

SCRIPT:



ELAC Chair: *Yes, The second idea is that . . .*

- 2) *Each parent leader will identify at least 3 other parents with leadership potential and personally reach out and invite them to become involved with their groups.*

- 3) *The first grade teacher and the principal will propose at the next staff meeting that teachers establish a volunteer Room Parent position. Some of the tasks of the Room Parent would include working with the teacher to keep parents informed about classroom activities, school activities/events, and any volunteer opportunities to serve on school committees/councils, and PTA.*

Principal: *SSC Chair, could you please read the three points under other ideas discussed? Thank you.*

SCRIPT:



SSC Chair: *Of course, the other Ideas discussed are to:*

- *Reach out to community organizations and businesses and ask them to post flyers of upcoming school events. Ask for small gift cards or coupons for prizes for opportunity drawings (following district guidelines) for parents attending virtual activities.*
- *Generate electronic thank you notes to send parents who participate in virtual activities.*
- *Work on improving the parent notification system for all events to ensure timeliness and increase the frequency of reminders sent out.*

THE END



NEXT STEPS:

At the close of this meeting, the committee sets the next meeting date to discuss Step 5 and to monitor progress with the top 3 ideas.

In Step 6, they will discuss any results toward restoring the high level of family engagement of past years.

Let's Debrief the Scenario. Focus on the 6 steps.

1. What did you learn from the scenario that you would like to share with others?
2. Any other thoughts?



**"Do something everyday that scares you.
Confidence results from making small
positive changes in spite of your fear."**

**— Eleanor Roosevelt
First Lady (1933-1945), Activist, and Advocate for Families**

Resources for Parent Leadership at Home

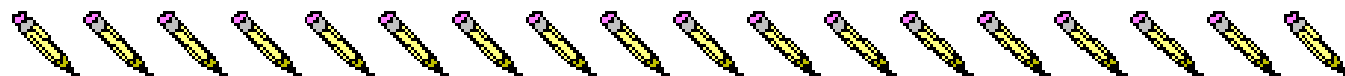


Handout 1 – Letter to My Child

Handout 2 – 10 Reasons to Get Involved

Handout 3 – 25 Things Strong Families Do to

You will find these 3 handouts in the Module 4 Packet



A letter to my child...



Learning is hard work. Please write an encouraging letter to your child to tell them you believe that they can be successful in school and in life.





10 Reasons To Get Involved

1

Your child benefits.

When parents get connected to the school, children do better. Research shows children whose parents are involved get better grades, do better on tests, and have fewer discipline problems at school.

2

We make a difference.

Our mission is to create the kind of school community where teachers and administrators can do their best work—and so can our children. We provide support for teachers in and out of the classroom. We provide resources they need. We help create learning opportunities for children. And we try to build the kind of supportive, caring atmosphere that makes school fun.

3

We pledge to honor your time constraints.

People are often reluctant to participate because they're afraid they'll get pulled into a black hole of never-ending time commitment. That won't happen here. An hour or two a semester really makes a differ-

6

There's a lot to be done.

These days, schools are asked to do more with less. Our help is needed more than ever to fill the gaps.

7

We can match jobs to your interests and abilities.

The work we do covers a broad spectrum: filing and photocopying, planning and executing events, writing and editing, working directly with children, managing a budget and cash flow, and lots more. We encourage creative ideas, and we're thrilled to have people take on tasks that meet their skills and interests.

8

We're welcoming.

To us, there are no "outsiders." We are people who have come together to work toward common goals. We couldn't be happier to have you join us in working toward those goals.

25 Ways Strong Families Learn Together

1. Have dinnertime conversations about school.
2. Speak to your children the way you want them to speak to you.
3. Have real conversations: take turns speaking and listening.
4. Start a story and take turns making up the middle and end of the story.
5. Read aloud with your children and ask them to re-tell the story.
6. Ask your children which story character they liked best and why.
7. Discuss the vocabulary (sight words) your children are learning at school.
8. Explore your children's special interests and find books at the library.
9. Continue your own learning—read a book, attend a workshop or community event.
10. Pick a common task and ask your children to write steps for completing the task.
11. Ask your children to write a thank you note to a friend or relative.
12. Ask your children's opinion about a topic and to explain their reasoning to you.
13. Regularly discuss the hopes and dreams you have for your children's future with them.
14. Make a checklist together of things to do to be ready for school each day.
15. Write encouraging notes and leave them for your children to find.
16. Attend parent-teacher conferences and school activities.
17. Check with the teacher to make sure your children are reading at grade level.
18. Teach your children how to greet people politely.
19. Take your children to community events.
20. Assign each child daily household tasks that help the family.





PLEASE USE THE QR CODE
TO RATE YOUR NEW
UNDERSTANDING ON
IMPROVING COMMUNICATION
AND USING PROBLEM SOLVING
STRATEGIES AT COMMITTEE
MEETINGS.

Certificate of completion

To receive your certificate, click on the link and complete the requested information. Your certificate of completion will be mailed to the address provided.



<https://bit.ly/Module4Certificate>



THE WEEAC TEAM THANKS YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

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PARENT LEADERSHIP SERIES

Module 4

Getting it Done:

How to be a “Super”

Communicator and Problem-Solver

October 26, 2021

WEEAC Presenters: Beatrice G. Fernández and Jeana Preston



Western Educational **EQUITY** Assistance Center

PARENT LEADERSHIP SERIES

Module 4 - Agenda

October 26, 2021



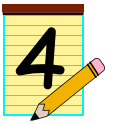
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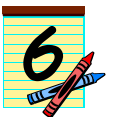
Why Being a Skilled Communicator Matters



Understanding and Managing Our Own Communication



How to solve Problems One-On-One





How to Help Groups Solve Problems

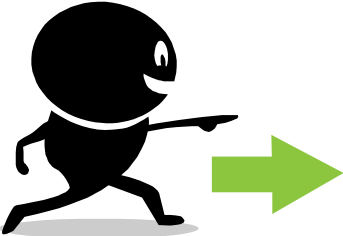


Resources for Parent Leadership at Home

Please note: “Parent” refers to any adult responsible for the well being and care of a child.

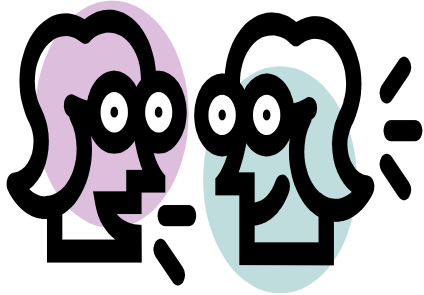
Personal Learning Shift for Leaders

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5	Avoiding conflict	Being a problem solver
6	Being suspicious	Listening to understand
7	Being overly critical	Assuming the best of others
8	Unaware of group process	Contributing to group goals/actions
9	Guarding information	Sharing information and resources
10	Being destructive (fighting) focused on adults want	Being constructive (helping) and focused on what students need



Foster the “Speak Friendly” Strategy

Attitude is the engine that drives all actions



Regardless, of the method you use for communicating (the telephone, newsletters, a flyer or in a face to face conversation) your attitude will come across loud and clear.

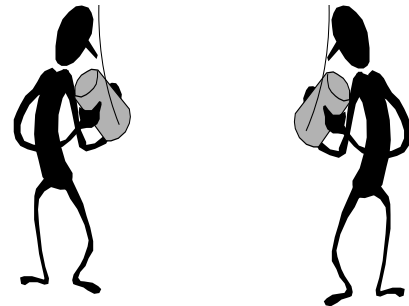
-
- ❖ **Speak Friendly Strategy**
Translates across all dialects & reduces barriers
 - ❖ **Smile**
It reflects on your face and in your voice
 - ❖ **Listen Actively**
Feel what the parent or staff member is trying to communicate
 - ❖ **Focus**
Keep the individual you are speaking with the focus of your thoughts
-

Managing Communication

Communication is the sharing or exchange of information between two or more people, and includes both verbal and nonverbal components.

Verbal Communication takes place in this way:

- What I *mean* is filtered through my personal experience and knowledge. It is then translated into what I say. This is called “encoding”.
- What I say travels through the air and is heard by the listener.
- What my listener hears is translated into what my listener understands, filtered through the listener’s personal experience and knowledge (as well as any distractions in the environment.) This is called “decoding”.
- Communication may not be complete without feedback to ensure both the speaker and the listener understand each other —ask clarifying questions.

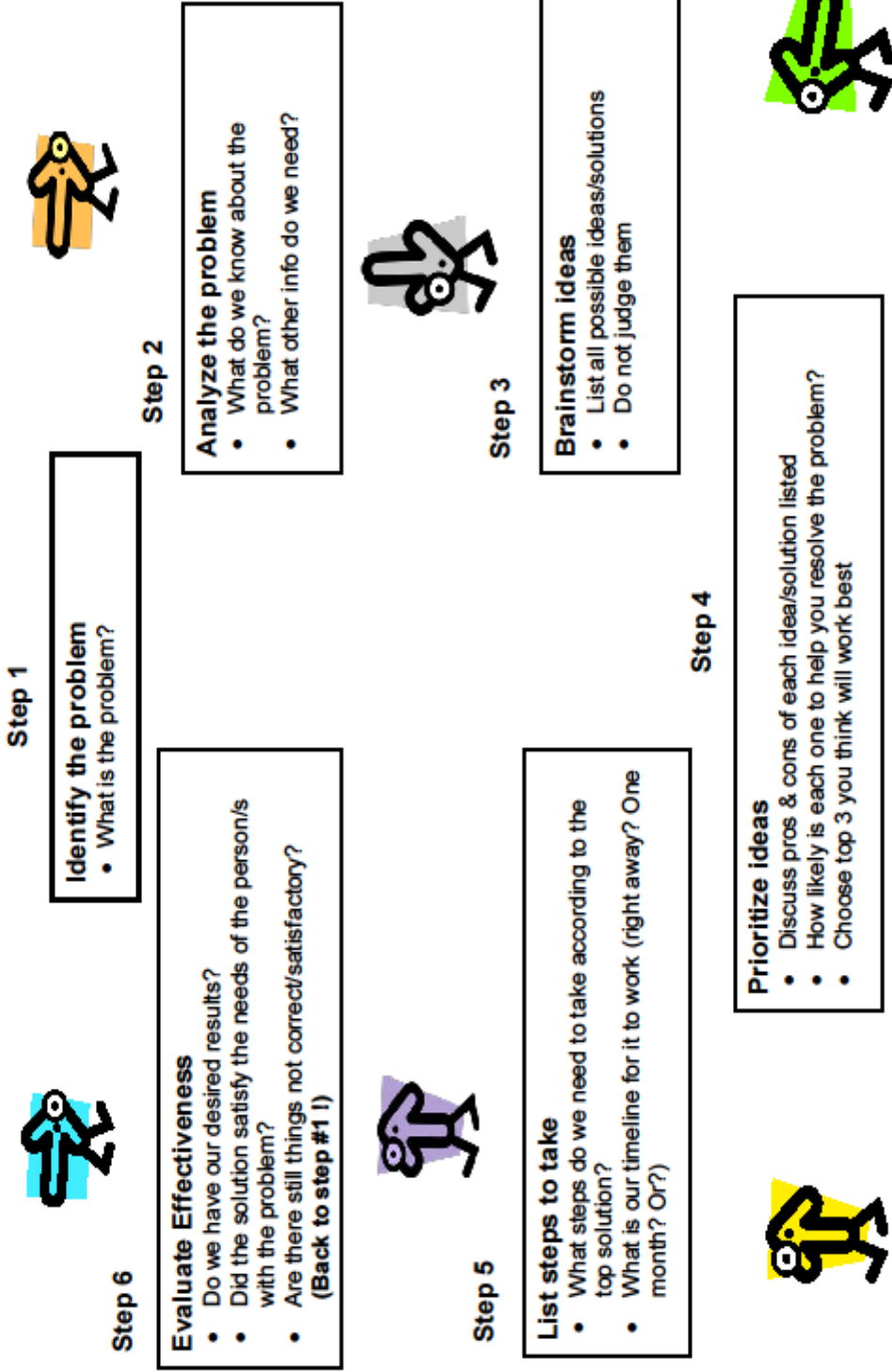


Nonverbal Communication—Body Language—is made up of these components:



- Facial expressions, posture, gestures of the hands, movement of the body, eye contact, and silence (accounts for 50-95% of actual

Problem-Solving Model





Tips for Dealing with Upset or Angry People

Often our *first reactions* are *not* the most effective for diffusing a hostile situation. The following *do's and don'ts* can help diffuse anger and change confrontations into meaningful problem-solving sessions. These behaviors do require a conscious effort and practice to become automatic and effective.

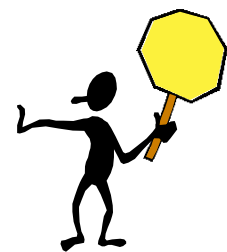
Do:

1. Evaluate the threat level. Remain calm.
2. If possible, ask the person to sit down and talk.
3. Listen to understand.
4. Ask clarifying questions.
5. As they speak louder, you speak softer.
6. Ask the person for their suggestions for solving the problem.
7. Next, tell them your suggestions.
8. Look for a resolution that combines “my way” and “your way” in order to see a “new way” forward.

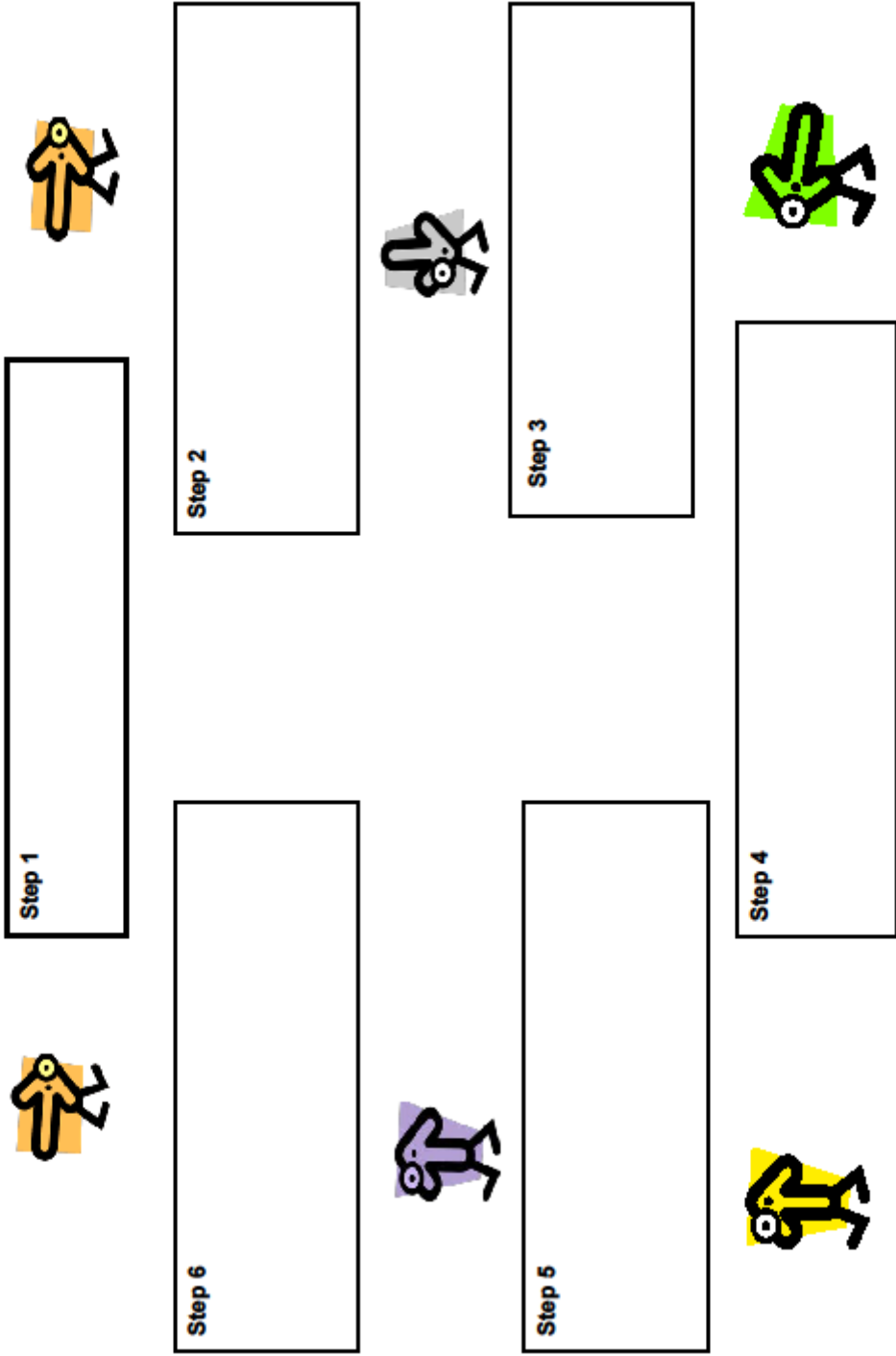


Don't:

1. Argue or place blame.
2. Raise your voice.
3. Defend or become defensive.
4. Promise things you can't produce.
5. Own problems that belong to others.
6. Belittle or minimize the problem.
7. Bring up other topics of concern.
8. Threaten action that you can't follow through with or is not reasonable for the situation.



Problem-Solving Model



Resources for Parent Leadership at Home



Handout 1 – Letter to My Child

Handout 2 – 10 Reasons to Get Involved

Handout 3 – 25 Things Strong Families Do to

10 Reasons To Get Involved

1

Your child benefits.

When parents get connected to the school, children do better. Research shows children whose parents are involved get better grades, do better on tests, and have fewer discipline problems at school.

2

We make a difference.

Our mission is to create the kind of school community where teachers and administrators can do their best work—and so can our children. We provide support for teachers in and out of the classroom. We provide resources they need. We help create learning opportunities for children. And we try to build the kind of supportive, caring atmosphere that makes school fun.

3

We pledge to honor your time constraints.

People are often reluctant to participate because they're afraid they'll get pulled into a black hole of never-ending time commitment. That won't happen here. An hour or two a semester really makes a difference. And we won't push you to commit more than you want to or are able to.

4

We have fun.

Volunteer work shouldn't be drudgery. We accomplish a lot, and not everything we do is easy. But we know we're not balancing the national debt, either. We don't take ourselves too seriously, and we try to enjoy ourselves along the way whenever possible.

5

Meet nice people who share your concerns.

We all have a common bond. We care about creating the best possible educational experience for our children. We are neighbors and peers who share many of the same experiences. And many friendships have developed as a result of those connections.

6

There's a lot to be done.

These days, schools are asked to do more with less. Our help is needed more than ever to fill the gaps.

7

We can match jobs to your interests and abilities.

The work we do covers a broad spectrum: filing and photocopying, planning and executing events, writing and editing, working directly with children, managing a budget and cash flow, and lots more. We encourage creative ideas, and we're thrilled to have people take on tasks that meet their skills and interests.

8

We're welcoming.

To us, there are no "outsiders." We are people who have come together to work toward common goals. We couldn't be happier to have you join us in working toward those goals.

9

We're about parent involvement, not fundraising.

In these times of tight budgets, parent groups everywhere are having to fill in the gaps, and so are we. But our number one goal is to get more parents connected to the school. That's because more than 300 independent research studies show that building parent involvement in education is the number one thing we can do to create a great school and improve student performance.

10

This work is very rewarding.

It's seeing the bright light of learning sparkle in a child's eye. It's seeing the smile that shows we're making school a little more fun—and a child feel a little more comfortable in a learning environment. It's learning that test scores have risen and knowing we played a role. There are lots of rewards, both big and small, for those who get involved. Won't you join us?

Contact:

PTOtoday

www.ptoday.com

25 Ways Strong Families Learn Together

- 1.** Have dinnertime conversations about school.
- 2.** Speak to your children the way you want them to speak to you.
- 3.** Have real conversations: take turns speaking and listening.
- 4.** Start a story and take turns making up the middle and end of the story.
- 5.** Read aloud with your children and ask them to re-tell the story.
- 6.** Ask your children which story character they liked best and why.
- 7.** Discuss the vocabulary (sight words) your children are learning at school.
- 8.** Explore your children's special interests and find books at the library.
- 9.** Continue your own learning—read a book, attend a workshop or community event.
- 10.** Pick a common task and ask your children to write steps for completing the task.
- 11.** Ask your children to write a thank you note to a friend or relative.
- 12.** Ask your children's opinion about a topic and to explain their reasoning to you.
- 13.** Regularly discuss the hopes and dreams you have for your children's future with them.
- 14.** Make a checklist together of things to do to be ready for school each day.
- 15.** Write encouraging notes and leave them for your children to find.
- 16.** Attend parent-teacher conferences and school activities.
- 17.** Check with the teacher to make sure your children are reading at grade level.
- 18.** Teach your children how to greet people politely.
- 19.** Take your children to community events.
- 20.** Assign each child daily household tasks that help the family.
- 21.** Set rules as a family and be consistent as much as possible.
- 22.** Have weekly family meetings. Give everyone a turn and solve problems together.
- 23.** Say no to your children when you need to, but say yes as much as you can.
- 24.** No matter what, everyday tell your children you love them.
- 25.** Take a deep breath, slow down, and find the joy in each day!

