

Principle 6

Uses Effective Communication Techniques:

The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

Looks like, Feels like, and Sounds like:

Actively listens to students; paraphrases student statements; summarizes subparts of lesson; asks non-judgmental questions; uses “I” messages; remains attentive to students; uses knowledge of effective of verbal, non-verbal, and technology communication techniques; varies voice/syntax; moves about during teaching; uses wait time when asking questions; explains expectations for specific assignments; uses appropriate facial expression and gestures that signal composure and respect

From University of Nebraska: Communicating with Students

Talking with Students

It is important that when we talk with students we are engaging in certain behaviors that facilitate openness and acceptance. When we actively use the recommendations listed below, students tend to be more receptive to listening and communicating with us. Here are some suggestions to use while communicating with students:

1. Posture:

Try to make your posture mirror that of the students. It is helpful to have your shoulders squared with the student's and on about the same level so you are face-to-face. It is also helpful to have a slightly forward lean toward the student.

2. Eye Contact:

Eye contact with students shows that you are interested in what they have to say.

3. Facial Expression:

What is shown on your face should match what is on the child's. Smiling when the child is obviously sad would be an example of an incongruent facial expression.

4. Distance:

Distance from the child shouldn't be too close or too distant; about 3 to 4 feet is the average. Standing too close can make the student uncomfortable, while standing too far away can indicate that you are disinterested in what the students is saying.

5. Distracting Behaviors:

Distracting behaviors, such as playing with your hands, staring out the window, or doing something else while listening should be eliminated when talking to students or staff members.

6. Voice Quality:

Your tone should match the child's. It would be inappropriate to be loud if the child is in a quiet mood.

A few more helpful hints:

1. Establish a positive relationship with the students (respect, courtesy, friendship)
2. Our job is to encourage students rather than to control.
3. Be positive in speaking to the students, avoid "putting them down."

4. When possible, organize ahead of time and think before speaking.
5. Use the student's name.
6. When giving directions, get the student's attention first.
7. Speak in a calm manner.
8. Try to maintain eye contact with the student.
9. Minimize distractions.
10. Let them know why the topic is important.
11. Let them know that you are talking to them for their benefit.
12. Use questions to involve the student and monitor understanding.
13. Include examples from the student's experience.
14. Avoid discussing a student's personal problems when you feel uncomfortable about it.
15. If frustration, anger, or boredom occurs, stop.
16. Reinforce and support students for listening.

Accepting Language

Acceptance of another is an important factor in fostering a relationship where a person can grow and actualize their full potential. At times, young people become what adults around them continuously tell them they are. Adults seem to think that **if** we accept a child where they are at, they may not make the changes to become better in the future. Therefore, **if** one conveys unacceptance, the child is more likely to change. Just the opposite **is** true.

A language of acceptance can open kids up and make them feel more comfortable and at ease. When they know we **will** accept them no matter what they tell us, we are more likely to see growth. When we communicate in an accepting way' we are using a tool that can facilitate positive effects in students.

"Talk can cure, and talk can foster constructive change. But it must be the right kind of talk."

-Thomas Gordon,
T.E.T.



Initiating and Directing Student Responses

As educators, we ask questions of students on a daily basis. As with any form of communication, the way the question is phrased will affect the quality and type of answer we will receive. The purpose of asking questions to gain information from others. These are called information seeking questions. Other questions may provide information and direct the student to answer in a certain way, or they may clarify or confirm information.

Most of the questions asked of students are direct questions and a specific answer is required. For example, "Can you tell me the answer to #1?" This form of question is interrogative and is usually a closed answer question where the student is looking for a specific answer. Questions used to encourage thought and opinions are open ended questions and usually indicate to the student to express a whole range of thoughts.

In order to effectively ask questions of students, the following suggestions are listed.

1. Pause effectively before and after asking a question.

Pausing before you ask a question gives you time to phrase your question. Pausing after you ask your question allows the student to think about their response.

2. Monitor questioning interactions.

What types of questions do you ask? Do you ask a closed question when what you really wanted was for the student to elaborate on his or her answer?

3. Ask meaningful questions.

Monitor how many questions you ask and the types of questions. Could you make questioning more effective if you asked fewer questions, more questions, or different types of questions?

4. Check of Understanding.

It is important that we monitor students' understanding. To check if a student understands what was communicated, ask the student to repeat directions, questions or summarize what was said.

By becoming a more effective questioner, you are providing opportunities for students to more openly respond and relay their thoughts. This promotes students to be more reflective and provides situations for them to actively become involved in their learning. By learning more about your style of questioning, you will become more effective when asking questions.



Self-Evaluation Form

Instructions:

Below is an activity you can do on your own to reflect on your communication style. This does not need to be submitted. Read each statement carefully and reflect on how they relate to your communication abilities. Respond by marking on the rating scale, with 1 being low and 5 being high, how well you perform each of the skills listed.

Communication Skill	Rating
1. Rapport with students	5 4 3 2 1
2. Communication with supervising teacher	5 4 3 2 1
3. Communication with other staff members	5 4 3 2 1
4. Communication with parents of children	5 4 3 2 1
5. Cooperation with administration	5 4 3 2 1
6. Friendliness and cooperativeness	5 4 3 2 1
7. Accepts constructive criticism	5 4 3 2 1
8. Adheres to ethical standards	5 4 3 2 1
9. Self-control in stressful situations	5 4 3 2 1



Effective Communication Techniques

Listen Actively

- Be attentive – concentrate on what is being said.
- Be impartial – don't form an opinion, just listen.
- Reflect back – restating what has been said helps the speaker know that you understand.
- Summarize – pull together the important messages so that you and the speaker recognize what was important during the conversation.

Nonverbal message

- Posture – let your body show that you are interested by sitting up and leaning toward the speaker.
- Equal positioning – if the speaker is standing, you stand. If the speaker is sitting, you sit as well.
- Facial expression – remember that feelings are reflected in facial expressions.
- Gestures – your body language reveals a lot about how you interpret a message, so be aware of when you send signals that might cause the speaker to believe that you are angry, in a hurry, bored, etc.

Express Thoughts and Feelings

- Be open and honest – collaboration between parents and professionals begins with the understanding that you trust each other with all information.
- Speak clearly – mumble and don't talk too quietly. If you don't know the word for something, describe what you mean so that you and the speaker can have a shared understanding of your concern or question.

Communicate Without Being Adversarial

- Express concerns non-judgmentally – talk about your questions or concerns without blaming other people. For example, you might be angry that your child is not receiving enough speech therapy. Rather than talk about the speech therapist not doing his/her job, discuss your idea of how often your child should receive this service.
- Use “I” messages. Rather than say, "You didn't explain that very well," say, "I didn't understand what you just said. Please explain it again."

from the Resource Manual for Families of Children with Special Needs, West Virginia University