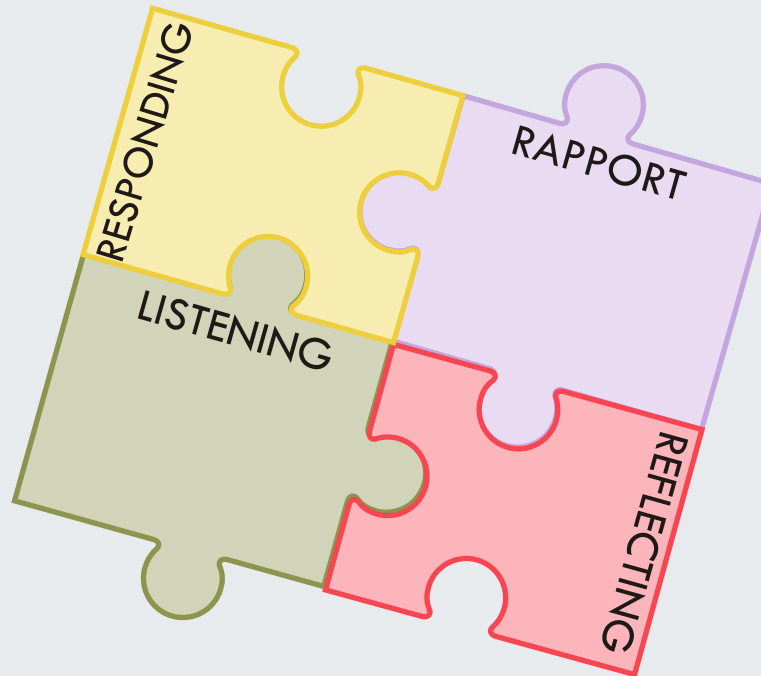


Partners in Community Inclusion

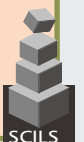


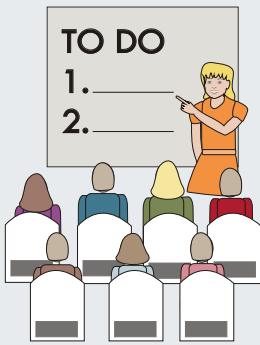
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION The Tool to Developing Successful Partnerships



Effective communication is very important to a quality of life. It is a critical part of building partnerships and relationships. Communication is more than a conversation between two or more people; it is the foundation of building a community.

Communication helps others understand what is important to you. The purpose of communication is to get your message across to others and to understand their message. Communication can help others decide what they can do for you or how they can support you. Your communication is only effective and successful when others understand it the way you meant it. Knowing and understanding your own message yourself is the first part of effective communication.





Three key components to Communication:

1. **Listening is:**

More than being quiet while the other person is talking.
Paying attention and understanding what is being said.
Showing with body language that you are engaged.
Asking questions.
Getting examples when something is not clear.

2. **Reflecting**

Politely saying back what you heard (reflecting)
Always seeking to understand

Example of good reflecting:

“Are you saying your department can't help me find a solution?”

Example of poor reflecting:

“Obviously you are telling me it's not your job to help me.”

3. **Responding**

When replying, be sure to “respond” to facts
Avoid “reacting” to feelings

Example of a good response:

“Tell me more about your concern” or

“I understand your frustration”

Example of a poor response - reacting:

“Why don't you just do your job?” or

“Why do you keep denying my child his rights?”



BUILDING RAPPORT

Building *rapport* is key to creating relationships and partnerships. *Rapport* describes the kind of a relationship or partnership (friendly, polite, etc.) you have with someone.

Good *rapport* happens when each person agrees that the relationship is important and each person respects the other. Good *rapport* can be developed in relationships you have with neighbors, teachers or service agencies. Having good *rapport* and respect for the other person is important in developing and maintaining relationships and partnerships.

Example of a respectful relationship:

“Mary has a good rapport with her neighbor, she was able to tell them their dog’s barking is keeping her awake. They were very understanding and able to quiet the dog. They even brought Mary cookies the next day.”

Tips for developing *rapport* with agencies and schools:

- Have your goal in mind and deliver your point with dignity, respect and listen to what others have to say.
- Be responsible for how you communicate and observe what you are hearing, ask questions or for examples.
- Leave anger and rage outside the meeting.
- Come to the meeting to create partnerships and solutions.

Developing *rapport* with other families:

- Believe the person can decide for themselves.
- Share your own experiences.
- Listen, but do not try to solve the problem.

PERSPECTIVE

Sometimes we see a situation through our own way of looking at it. Seeing another's perspective is important for any relationship or partnership. **A perspective is** - one way to look at a situation. It is not the only way. When building relationships it will be necessary to try seeing things from the other person's perspective.

Tips to remember:

- Try seeing things from the other person's world.
- Remember, it's just *one* way of looking at things, there are other ways to look at the same situation.

Example of seeing another's perspective:

"Maria is frustrated because she feels her daughter's teacher does not listen when she explains how she needs to be shown something using Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). She often leaves meetings feeling frustrated."

What is Maria's perspective on this situation?

"Maria is frustrated and feels like she is not being heard. She believes the teacher is being difficult without giving her a chance to explain why she prefers using ABA."

What might the teacher's perspective be?

"The teacher's perspective might be that she has 30 students and 60 parents to deal with. Her days are long and demanding. She could believe that she has earned the right to be respected for her years of teaching. She also could be fearful of practicing a new skill she isn't familiar with."

Conclusion:

Both Maria and the teacher believe they have the best interest of the child in mind. One major difference is the teacher must see to the interest of all the children and Maria is responsible for her own child's interest. Taking time to understand each other's perspective through rapport building activities goes a long way towards building trust, understanding, and creating flexible solutions.