



NEW YORK STATE MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM

TITLE: Developing Effective Communication Skills

DESCRIPTION: This session will help parents learn how to effectively communicate with schools and begin developing interpersonal communication skills.

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SERIES:

This is Module 3 in the 5-part “Developing Self-Advocacy Skills” series. While it is recommended to start with Session 1, “Our Culture is a Positive Tool in Schools,” Session 3 can be used on its own. This is designed to be used with a group or to be adapted for use in homes and with adolescents.

Facilitator Guide

OBJECTIVES/LEARNING TARGET(S)

At the end of this session, parents should be able to:

- Craft a clear message when communicating
- Engage in active listening
- Understand the importance of asking questions to make sure all messages are clearly understood
- Strengthen ability to paraphrase/ summarize messages heard
- Understand non-verbal cues and their impact on interpersonal communication

WORKSHOP/MODULE DESIGN

This session can be facilitated with a group of parents or individually within a home. It can also be used with adolescents, in groups or individually. The Facilitator Notes within the guide will have information about how to facilitate based upon your setting.

CONNECTION TO THE NYS MEP

THEORY OF ACTION

Developing Self-Advocacy Skills

- Knowing how to effectively communicate is empowering; it is a step towards developing the courage to self-advocate.
- The workshop instills an understanding of purposely choosing to speak up.
- The workshop provides a safe environment for practicing to effectively communicate with people across difference.
- The workshop helps understand the importance of willingly asking questions when something is unclear or needs clarification.

Identity Development

- Effectively communicate the strengths of one’s culture and story to others.
- Empathetically listen to the life experiences and culture of others.

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- Participant Handouts (*English, Spanish, Karen, Burmese*)
 1. Participant Agenda
 2. Self-Advocacy Continuum
 3. What is Effective Communication?
- Developing Effective Communication Skills PowerPoint
- Timer

STAFFING NEEDS

- When this session is being done with a group at a local Parent Engagement location, childcare will be needed.
- Interpretation should be provided when the parents and facilitators speak different languages or more than one language is present.

ADJUSTING FOR USE WITH INDIVIDUAL FAMILY IN THE HOME

If you are facilitating in a home with one family, the activities become conversations between you and the family with everyone sharing.

ADJUSTING FOR USE WITH ADOLESCENTS

These workshops will work with young people. Review the Facilitator Guide, and decide what elements you will use with students. You may need to modify some of the activities to work with your adolescents; however, all of the Participant Handouts remain appropriate

Facilitator Notes: The estimated times in this Guide are based on using one language. When adjusting for incorporating a second language, a general rule is to double the time needed.

This Guide has numerous places for the facilitator to provide an example from their own life and culture. [These examples have brackets, so the facilitator can replace the examples provided by the Developer.] These examples are provided to help prompt facilitators to think of examples to fit the situation, and in turn to help parents think of their own examples.

This Guide has places where the facilitator might want to use a participant's name. The sample dialogue uses a [sample name] with brackets around it as a reminder to substitute a real participant's name.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

(10 to 15 minutes)

Process

1. Welcome the group.
2. State the name of workshop.
3. Explain how the introductions will work.
4. Introduce yourself as a model of answering the questions you provided.

Facilitator Note: A facilitator should welcome the group to the workshop, state the name of the workshop, and then move into introductions. As you know, workshops are often foreign to migrant parents whether they are immigrants or not. When participants are shy, move around the group and give attention and a warm smile to each person as they introduce themselves.

In addition to Name, pick one question from the following suggestions, or feel free to think of your own.

Questions

- Name?
- Share something you recently saw on television that made you laugh.

- Share the last song you heard before coming here.
- Share something you were told as a child that you still remember today.
- Share if you like to talk one-on-one, in a small group, or in front of an audience of people. (Why did you choose that?)

Key Points

- Welcome
- Developing Effective Communication Skills
- Please share your name and share something you were told as a child that you still remember today.
- Name and response to question.

***It might sound like:** Welcome, it is so nice to have you hear today. This is part of a five-session series, and I'm so happy to see so many of you again. Today we are going to work on Developing Effective Communication Skills. I think you will enjoy the workshop we're going to do a lot of fun things.*

Facilitator Note: If you are facilitating this in a home with one family, personalize the conversation instead of using the general reference to *parents*.

Let's start by getting to know each other a bit more. Today we will introduce ourselves by sharing our name and something that you were told as a child that you still remember today. I'll start. My name is _____, and I work with the _____ METS. Something I was told as a child that I still remember today is that no matter what you do, there will be some people who like it and approve, and others who do not. So follow your heart and do what you believe is right.

Who would like to go next? . . .

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

(5 minutes)

Key Points

- This is a process. Everyone is on a journey.
- It is important for parents to develop effective communication skills.
- Effective communication includes: purposeful sending, active listening, asking questions, paraphrasing, and awareness of non-verbal cues.
- Introduction to the Self-Advocacy Continuum

- Parents have told us that when they move to a new area, they need more help with advocacy.
- The arrow on the left represents the increasing independence of parents and students.
- The arrow on the bottom represents time.
- There are three years of eligibility for Migrant Education services.
- Where do you see yourself on the continuum from needing someone to advocate for you and your child, advocating with help, to being able to advocate independently

Facilitator Note: If participants attended Session 1 or 2, this overview would be a good opportunity to connect the Sessions together by adding this additional information.

Key Points

- This is the third session in a five-session series focused on increasing self-advocacy skills.
- The first session focused on your culture.
- The second session focused on developing your Testimonio/personal story.

It might sound like: This is the third session in a 5-session series focused on the journey of developing self-advocacy skills. The first session allowed you to understand the importance of your culture. The second session allowed you to develop a Testimonio, your personal story based on your personal life experiences and cultural experiences. Today's session continues the journey.

It might sound like: This is a journey, a process, providing a step – one step to empowering you to self-advocate in your child's school. Now, this session will help you learn how to effectively communicate with people in different spaces. You will learn how to speak with purpose, listen to understand, and ask questions to help you make sure all messages are clearly understood – by yourself and your audience. Knowing how to effectively communicate is empowering and it is another step towards developing the courage to self-advocate.

Before we take part in this session, let me start by sharing our Self-Advocacy Continuum. As adults, we know that you have experience advocating for things you need, and interacting with schools to get what your need for your child can be hard. Parents have told us that when they move to a new community, they need more extra help getting to know what resources are available.

Looking at the Self-Advocacy Continuum, the arrow on the left shows how parents and students can increase their independence in self-advocacy. The arrow on the bottom shows time. It represents the three years of eligibility for Migrant Education services. You can see that as a family stays in one place, the parents can start taking over more of the role of advocating for their family's needs.

I would like you to think about where you see yourself on the continuum, from needing someone to advocate for you and your child, to someone advocating with you, to you being able to advocate for your child independently.

During this time, it is our goal to support you as you increase your skills for self-advocacy. Today's focus on communication skills are one way to help you build strength as you become more independent at advocating in schools.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION?

(5 minutes)

Key Points

- We all talk and interact with people.
- There are moments where interacting with people can be easy or can be stressful.
- When it is stressful or the conversation is difficult, effective communication skills are helpful.
- Effective communication also helps to avoid misunderstandings.
- Effective communication includes: clear messaging; active listening; asking questions; paraphrasing.

It might sound like: *We all talk to people. We talk to our families, our friends. Many times it is easy to talk to people we know and those people we love, but we also are in situations where we talk to people we don't know that well, or people that may not see us as equals. Those moments are really tough, and can be stressful.*

Can you tell me a time that was really easy for you to have a conversation? Who was it with? How did it feel to talk to that person? [take one or two responses from the group]

Can you tell me a time that was really hard to have a conversation? Who was it with? How did it feel? Why do you think it was so hard? [take one or two responses from the group]

Can you tell me a time when a friend or family member was mad at you and you didn't know why? Or something was said and it was misunderstood and a person didn't talk to you again? Or have you ever been the person that became very angry while talking and the other person acted as if they didn't know what was going on? For example, I could have had a conversation with [Betty] and left thinking that was just a great conversation. It couldn't have gone more perfectly than that. [Betty] leaves thinking, next time I see [Jermaine], I'm going to let [him] have it. I can't believe [he] said what [he] said. How can two people have the exact same conversation and leave with two different ways of experiencing how that conversation went?

During our time together, we are going to practice how to have those tough conversations when it is hard to talk to people. We are going to learn how to make sure what we say is clear and

helps the person hearing it understand. We are going to learn how to listen so we know exactly what the other person is saying. We are going to learn how to ask questions when we don't understand something. And we are going to learn how to paraphrase (summarize/repeat in our own words) what we hear so we can understand what the other person is saying. We are going to learn how important effective communication can be so that what you said is not misunderstood. We will learn how to avoid miscommunication which could lead to conflict resulting in anger, silence, abuse, and more negative emotional outbreaks.

ACTIVITY: INTERGROUP DIALOGUE

(40 minutes)

Key Points

- Practice having a conversation.
- In conversation you are either speaking or listening.
- This activity is designed to have you have a clear message when you speak.
- It is designed to help you listen so that you understand.
- We will practice paraphrasing – repeating back what the other person says in your own words.
- We will practice giving feedback and asking questions.

What it might sound like: *We are going to practice having a conversation. When we have a conversation, you are either speaking or you are listening. This activity will help you have a clear message when you speak, listen so that you can better understand what is being said, paraphrase (say in your own words) so that you are clear that what you heard is what the other person was trying to say and give feedback and ask questions.*

Demonstration: Purposeful Sending

(10 minutes)

Process

1. Share two messages, with the first disjointed and difficult to follow, and make the second message, clear and coherent
2. Ask participants to provide feedback about the difference between the two messages
3. Summarize Purposeful Sending – use handout as a guide for defining purposeful sending.

It might sound like: *I am going to share 2 messages. Listen to each one. I want you to try and hear what the differences are with each one. After the second message, I will ask you to give me feedback and ask questions about the two messages I am sharing. Feel free to write your thoughts down and we will have a conversation after I am done with both of them.*

Sample First message: *I love the movies. I try to go every week. When I go I eat popcorn, candy, and soda. Oh, that reminds me of a time I went to the store and got this amazing deal on soda. Three bottles for three dollars. It was amazing. Wait, you don't like soda. I can't believe you don't like soda. That is ridiculous. Everyone likes soda. I bet you don't like candy either. My goodness. Anyway, the movie I went to see was awesome.*

Sample Second message: *I love going to the movies. I try to go every week. Going to the movies makes me feel like I am experiencing something new each time. It makes me feel adventurous, alive. I try to see movies that make me laugh, like comedies. Do you like comedies? What type of movies do you like? Do they make you feel a certain way? I would love to talk more about the movies we all like to watch and learn about what types you like and share the types I like.*

Group Feedback: *I just shared two messages (stories). Now it is time for you to give me feedback. What did you see and hear? Do you have any questions? What was the difference between the two messages?*

When you speak, you are doing something called purposeful sending. This means that you know exactly what you want to say and you are going to say it in a way that the other person can clearly understand. Some things to think about:

- *Speak to be understood.*
- *Be open and share your ideas, feelings, and values.*
- *Do not speak or share your message in a way that puts the other person down.*
- *Do not attack the person that is listening.*

Facilitator Note: When sharing the concept of Purposeful Sending, try to make clear that this does not have to do with language, fancy words or accents, or anything of that sort. All of this applies if you are working through an interpreter. It is about the message you are trying to convey and sharing it in a way that the other person can understand your intended meaning.

Demonstration: Feedback with Paraphrasing

(5 minutes)

Facilitator Note: Asking for a volunteer who can time 1 minute on their phone, allows the facilitator to concentrate on being a good listener and involves one more participant in the demonstration.

Process

1. Ask a volunteer to speak on what they did over the weekend.
2. Ask a volunteer to be the timekeeper
3. Use a timer: Give the volunteer a minute to talk
4. Facilitator paraphrase what the volunteer said, and
5. Check with volunteer for the accuracy
6. Summarize paraphrasing

It might sound like: *We are going to practice this some more. Can I have a volunteer? Thank you, [Jermaine]. So, [Jermaine], I want you to share with me what you did over the weekend. I am going to give you 1 minute to talk. Are you ready? Wonderful, now tell me what you did over the weekend.*

Your minute is up. Thanks again for sharing, [Jermaine]. Now I am going to paraphrase what I think I heard you say. Paraphrasing is just me saying what you said in my own words. So, based on what I just heard you say, you did _____ over the weekend and _____ Is this what you were trying to share?

Facilitator Note: If the volunteer states that yes, what you paraphrased is exactly what they were trying to convey, then offer positive feedback as to how the volunteer shared their message and why it was effective and easy to understand.

If the volunteer states that no, what you paraphrased was not what they were trying to convey, and then ask the group why you may not have effectively received the message. Ask questions to help the group understand what you might have missed and the areas where it made it difficult to receive the message clearly.

Wonderful! So we should have a sense of the importance paraphrasing and why it is important to repeat the meaning of what the other person said in our own words so that we can be sure we understand. We should also have a sense of the importance of a clear message and how that can help to effectively get your message across to the person you are speaking with. Now we are going to work on our ears, on our listening skills.

Demonstration: Active Listening

(15 minutes)

1. Ask two volunteers to share a story about what they did on the weekend.
2. Use a timer. Give each volunteer 30 seconds to speak.
 - a. When the first volunteer is talking, show bad body language and act distracted as the volunteer is talking; DO NOT give feedback, just move on.
 - b. When the second volunteer is talking, model attentive, engaged listening, focused on what the volunteer is saying; take time to GIVE feedback.
3. Ask the rest of the participants to share what they observed, **and process**.

***It might sound like:** Now I am going to need two volunteers. The first volunteer will have 30 seconds to speak, and I am going to listen a certain way. Pay attention to what you see and hear. After that is done, the second volunteer is going to speak for 30 seconds. Again, I will listen but I will listen in a different way. I want you to pay attention to the different ways I listened to each person.*

[Betty], thank you for volunteering. You are going to have 30 seconds to talk about what you did this weekend. I am just going to listen. Ready. Begin.

Facilitator Note: As the first person is speaking, visibly show that you are distracted. Look at your watch, pull out your phone, roll your eyes. Model poor body language and negative non-verbal cues. If the participant stops, nod and tell them to go on.

Thank you, [Betty]! Did everyone take note of my listening there? Okay, now we are going to try again with a different volunteer. [Mona], you have 30 seconds to talk about what you did this weekend. I am just going to listen. Ready? Begin.

Facilitator Note: As the second person is speaking, model active listening. Be attentive, have positive body language. Do not interrupt. After the second person is done speaking, paraphrase what they shared. Ask questions that will help them elaborate.

[Mona], thank you for sharing. If I heard correctly, what you were saying is _____. Is that what you were trying to share? I appreciate you sharing this. I had a question about

_____. *Can you tell me more about that? Thank you for clarifying that. I appreciate you sharing and really look forward to our next conversation.*

Let's thank [Betty] and [Mona] for volunteering! Thanks again. Now, what did we see here? What was the difference in the way I was listening to [Betty] and then in the way I was listening to [Mona]? Which way do you think showed the speaker that I was focused on what they were saying and cared about what they were saying?

Also, did you notice how I was listening? It is important to notice our non-verbal cues as we listen. What this means is, are you looking at your phone while you listen? Are you looking at everything in the room while you listen and not at the person? Are you rolling your eyes or yawning while you listen? Sometimes a person can tell another person how they feel about what they are hearing without words. This can make the person speaking feel uncomfortable or feel that what they have to share is not important because the listener looks like they rather be anywhere else besides present in the conversation.

Also, listening involves more than just our ears. It requires us to show that we understand what was said through paraphrasing. It requires us to ask question to make sure we clearly understand and we leave the room with a clear message. It requires us to share our feedback, tell the person how what they said impacted us or ask them to rephrase what they said to help you better understand.

Facilitator Note: It is important to notice our non-verbal cues and body language when we listen. Different cultures have different non-verbal cues to show listening with interest and respect. In the United States, this demonstrated by looking at the speaker's face. In other cultures, this is demonstrated by looking down.

If participants are not voicing the differences, use questions to focus their attention on what happened in the two situations. For example, in the first sharing, did the listener give any feedback? Did the listener paraphrase, ask a question? . . . (continue through second for comparison)

Review the Components of Effective Communication

(5 minutes)

1. Use the Power Point, "Module 3 – Developing Effective Communication Skills" to review all the parts demonstrated.
2. Give participants the companion handout, "What is Effective Communication?" to use with the Power Point.

Facilitator Note: Each slide in the Power Point has the title of one of the components with a graphic. The handout has descriptors that explain each component.

Following this review, participants will have an activity for everyone to practice being the Purposeful Sender and the Effective Listener.

Purposeful Sending

- Know what you want to say.
- Say it in a way that the other person (the listener) can clearly understand.
- Be open and share your ideas, feelings, and values.
- Do not speak or share your message in a way that puts the other person down.
- Do not attack the person who is listening.

Active Listening

- Listen without judging the speaker.
- Let the other person finish speaking – Don't interrupt.
- Identify if anything is interfering with your ability to receive/hear the message.
 - Noise level, room temperature, talking speed (is person speaking too fast?), respect, energy, other distractions
- Listen with your heart and mind. *I think I heard you say*

Body Language and Non-Verbal Cues

- Think about your body language and non-verbal cues.
- Show the speaker you are interested in what they are saying.
- Try not to do things that may make the speaker feel that you are not really interested in what they are saying (looking away, looking at your phone or watch, yawning or rolling your eyes).

Paraphrasing

- Rephrase the meaning of what the person said in your own words.
 - Do you mean this _____ when you said _____?
 - What your statement means to me is
 - If I understand what you said, I think (or feel)
 - I think I heard you say
 - Would this be an example of the point you made?

Feedback

- Letting the speaker know what you understood.
- Ask questions to make sure you understand what the speaker said.
- Letting the speaker know how you feel about what they said.

Role Play: Putting it All Together

(20-25 minutes)

Process

1. Use Timer
2. **Model** what will happen during the Role Play
 - a. Partners: Facilitator with Volunteer
 - i. Take a moment to think about what you will say
 - b. Two minutes: Facilitator talks and Volunteer listens
 - i. What is the hardest thing about going to your child's school?
 - ii. What is the best thing about going to your child's school?
 - c. One minute: Volunteer paraphrases
 - d. Two minutes: Volunteer and Facilitator give each other feedback

It might sound like: *Can I get a volunteer? Yes, [Jonah]. Thank you for volunteering. Now sit here facing me. I am going to speak for 2 minutes straight. You are going to listen to what I say. You cannot speak while I am speaking. Just listen. After my 2 minutes are up, you are going to paraphrase what I said. Remember what we said paraphrase means? Just tell me what you heard in your own words. After you are done we will give each other feedback. During the feedback session, you will ask any questions you feel you need to ask to help you better understand what I said. You can also offer me feedback about how I said what I said, or ways I could be more clear. Give me a moment to think about what is the hardest and what is the best thing about going to my child's school.... Okay, let's begin.*

Engage in the role play.

Wonderful! Thank you, [Jonah]. Now everyone can practice.

Facilitator Note: Count your participants to anticipate if there will need to be one group of three. In a group of three, there is one speaker and two listeners, so everyone is involved.

If the participants speak different languages, you will want them to work with other speakers of their language for this practice. If not, you will have to use interpretation. **Note that there are other workshops you can facilitate about how to use an Interpreter.**

Process

1. Split participants into pairs. If there is an extra person, there will be two listeners in the group of three
2. Conduct role play
3. Process

Key Points

- Role Play – groups of two
- Groups identify the 1st Speaker
 - Give the First Speaker, a moment to think about what you want to share about
 - What is the hardest thing about going to your child’s school?
 - What is the best thing about going to your child’s school?
 - Give the First Listener a moment to think about being an Active Listener
- Use the timer to start and stop
 - Two minutes for the Speaker to talk
 - One minute for the Listener(s) to paraphrase
 - Two minutes for both the Speaker and Listener to give each other feedback
- Switch roles and repeat
 - New Speaker take a moment to think about what you want to share....

It might sound like: Now I am going to ask each of you to practice this. Please find a partner. Once you have a partner, select which one will be the listener and which one will be the speaker. Okay, now that you know who the speaker and listener are, the speaker will have 2 minutes to talk about this question – “What is the hardest thing about going to your child’s school? What is the best thing about going to your child’s school?”

Speakers, take a moment and get a clear idea about what you want to say about what the hardest and best things are.

The listener will just listen; you can’t speak or interrupt.

After the 2 minutes are up, I will say “TIME” and then the listener will have 1 minute to paraphrase what they heard (remember what we said paraphrasing was). After that minute is up, I will say “TIME”. After that, you will have 2 minutes to share feedback with each other – ask questions, let each other know what was difficult or easy about speaking or listening or paraphrasing. After the 2 minutes are up, I will say “TIME”. Then we will switch roles and do it again. Does everyone get it? Okay, begin.

...Great! Now switch roles. New speakers, please take a moment to get a clear idea of what you want to say about the topic. Does everyone remember the instruction? Okay, begin.

...Great! Now that we are done with the pairs, let us come back together and talk about the experience. What was easy about this? What was challenging? Why? What do you think you need to work on?

Facilitator Note: During the large group debrief, really hone in on the challenges to purposeful sending and active listening. Ask questions about their experiences as the speaker and then as the listener. Ask them what they feel they need to be more effective speakers and stronger listeners.

Great job everyone! I think we have a great start to becoming stronger speakers and listeners. Keep practicing! Practice when speaking to your friends, colleagues, children. Remember, just like our muscles, we cannot be better listeners if we don't exercise our ears.

NEXT STEPS: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN REAL TIME

(15 minutes)

Key Points

- This is a process. Everyone is on a journey.
- It is important for parents to develop effective communication skills.
- Effective communication includes: purposeful sending, active listening, asking questions, paraphrasing, awareness of non-verbal cues.
- Review examples of issues that may arise and think as a group, What would you do?

It might sound like: Now that we practiced and you learned some effective communication skills, let's discuss how we can use these skills in real situations. I am going to share some scenarios and you respond to how you would handle these things using the new knowledge and skills we just practiced.

Facilitator Note: For this section, share 4 or 5 scenarios that can present obstacles and challenges to effective communication. Think of a *What Would You Do...* model, posing that question after each scenario. Feel free to use the following sample scenarios and/or create your own that may better fit the challenges families are facing.

Example Scenarios

You just talked with your child's teacher. After you finished, the teacher says she did not understand what you said or she does not get what you are saying. What would you do?

You just talked with your child's teacher. After you finished, the teacher starts talking. While she is talking, you realize she is saying things that you did not say when you just spoke. What would you do?

You are talking with your child's teacher. As you are talking, there are multiple interruptions. The loud speaker keeps blasting information. There is a beeping sound that does not go away. And, the teacher's phone rang and, while she is not answering it, you notice she keeps looking at her phone. What do you do?

You are preparing to talk with your child's principal. You are nervous. You know that when you are nervous it is easy to be distracted. You start to think about different things and you start to zone out. What do you do?

It has been great spending time together today. Thank you for your time and commitment to your children's education.

APPRECIATIONS

(5 minutes)

Key Points

- Time to share appreciations for self, others, or a new concept or idea learned.
- Create a climate that honors individual risk-taking.
- Create a forum for supporting each other.

***It might sound like this:** We like to close our workshops by taking time to share something you appreciate about yourself, someone in the group, or an idea or concept that you have learned. Appreciations are important because they create a climate that honors individual risk-taking. It can be hard to share in front of others. Workshops are a new way to learn for some of you. Appreciating what we have learned from each other is a good way to support each other.*

Evaluations

Ask Participants to fill out their evaluations.

Facilitator Note: If you are doing this in a home, first appreciate something about what the parent shared. Then ask one or two leading questions asking what the parents appreciated from the session.