

Diverse Learners CoP Summary of Conference Call

Topic

Communicating with Parents

Date

March 12, 2007

Facilitator

Donna Lupatkin (donna@peje.org)

Guest Expert

Molly Warner, Coach from Hidden Sparks

Goals

- 1) Learn about effective strategies to communicate with parents about their child's progress.
- 2) Assess your own communication style in order to be more reflective in your use of language in reporting a student's progress.

Summary of Key Points

In presenting the information shared by the guest, please refer to the attached PowerPoint the rubric for communicating. Dr. Mel Levine's 'Nine Guiding Principles' is embedded in the PowerPoint.

Setting the Context

Ms. Warner began by saying that it is important for parents to be on the same page as the teacher and the school in order to assure positive participation and a positive working relationship. She launched the conversation by introducing Dr. Mel Levine's 'School's Attuned' Nine Guiding Principles. These principles set the context for discussing a child's development in the most comprehensive and descriptive way.

1. **A Positive View of Neurodevelopmental Diversity:** No individual learning profile is the same. It is important to celebrate the uniqueness of each child. It is important to look at what each child is wired to be good at.
2. **A Stress on Neurodevelopmental Profiles:** Brain functions involved in learning may change over time. An early strength may diminish or an early liability may emerge as a relative strength.
3. **A Quest for Specificity and Individuality in Understanding Students:** Look beyond labels and be specific regarding what you see going on with the child.
4. **A Policy of Labeling Observable Phenomena Rather than Children:** When we consider a child's progress and communicate it to the parent, be careful to describe what we actually see.

5. A Commitment to Collaboration among Professionals, Parents, and Children: It is vital to be upfront with the notion that we are a team and that everyone's insights are appreciated.
6. A Desire to Strengthen the Strengths and Affinities of Children: We have the tendency to focus on what is not working. It is crucial to strengthen the child's strengths and passions. We want the child to have a positive view of himself as a learner.
7. A Belief in the Value of Demystification: Take the mystery out of the learning profile. Be specific regarding what the child does well and what specific break downs are interfering with their learning.
8. A Consistent Effort to Help Learners Learn about Learning: Help the student to understand his own learning style and give him the tools to best manage that style.
9. An Infusion of Optimism for Kids with All Kinds of Minds: Once the child becomes an adult, he can institute any action plan he wishes based on his learning profile. It is important to show the child that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Rubric for Parent/Teacher Communication

Ms. Warner gave a step by step description of the rubric for teacher communication. Please review the rubric found in the PowerPoint to get a more complete understanding of the outline. The following are key strategies:

- It is important to detail the specific tasks a child is good at
- Be sure to share something special about what the child did in the classroom
- Teachers are encouraged to focus on observable, factual behavior
- Articulate goals that the teacher, parent and child have developed conjointly-this makes reports more valuable as it becomes a plan that can be referred back to
- Use adjectives and move away from judgmental labels
- Use descriptive non-judgmental language in a caring way
- Be specific to the child
- If a child has difficulties, describe and give strategies to better manage them
- Tie together the positive with the difficult
- Give strategies as descriptors-both teacher and parent can go back to this report next semester and gauge progress
- We can't assume that all teachers know how to write a meaningful narrative. Training is vital. Consider using faculty meeting opportunities to train staff. Share vocabulary with colleagues. We don't know how to do better until we are trained. Share level four evaluations with teachers so they become familiar with how to present a well developed evaluation.
- In report writing, focus on quality vs. quantity
- When the report sounds generic, you lose the reader (i.e. parent)

Commentary by Participants

Participants supported the notion of setting up a partnership between the school, parents, and the students in assuring the best service delivery. In order to do that, the following recommendations were made by our listeners.

- Conceptualize the process as similar to creating an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) by the public schools, so as to present the parents with material in a way that makes it understandable to them. Further, that everyone in the paradigm has a piece of the responsibility in the care of the student.
- It is important that teachers read previous evaluations. To make this practical, it would be advisable to include a section at the end of the evaluation where there was a well defined review along with a list of targeted strategies.
- It would helpful if the writer placed on the front page a list of the goals and a compilation of strategies to make it more practical for all readers.
- List the child's strengths, leaning style, and strategies for intervention on the front page.
- During parent/teacher conferences it is advisable to DESCRIBE vs. DIAGNOSE!

Resources

www.allkindsofminds.com

www.epsbooks.com

To review Dr. Mel Levine's theory and to review his books:

One book in particular that Ms. Warner suggested was:

A Mind at a Time by Mel Levine

For middle school children she suggested:

The Mind That Is Mine by Mel Levine

**PEJE DIVERSE LEARNERS CoP
MARCH 12, 2007**

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

**Donna Lupatkin, Facilitator
Molly Warner, Hidden Sparks, Guest**

Log in Instructions

- To join the conference call:
- **Dial:** 1-866-266-3378
- **Enter Conference # ID:** 617-367-0110
- **Enter Password:** 7353
- You will be prompted to say your name as you enter the call.
- In addition to participating by phone, those of you who have access to a computer and would like to simultaneously view the accompanying PowerPoint, please log on to:
- www.idtconnect.com/dataconB.asp
- **On left side of screen, under Participant Log In:**
- **Type in 6173670110(no spaces) where it asks for Conference ID #**
- **Type in your name**
- **Type in your school**
- **Type in your email address**
- **Click on Log In**

- *** 1 to mute**

Conference Call Etiquette

- Remember to mute your phone by pressing *1.
- Press *1 again, when you would like to speak.
- *Do not* use your phone HOLD or mute button. If you do, your music will be broadcast to all of us on the call.

Agenda

- Welcome and New Business
- Follow up to Hebrew and Judaic Curriculum Conference call
- Today's Goals
- Setting the Context
- Nine Guiding Principles (Mel Levine)
- Rubrics for Communication
- Parent Teacher Conference Plan
- Reflections
- Next Steps
- Future Conference Calls
- V Bulletin Mini Training

Results from Hebrew and Judaic Studies Conference Call

- What information did you take back to your school following our February call?
- What instructional strategies did you utilize?
- How did they work?

Today's Goals

- Learn about effective strategies to communicate with parents about their child's progress.
- Assess your own communication style in order to be more reflective in your use of language in reporting student's progress.

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Our Guest: Molly Warner

Molly is a staff developer and in-class coach at Hidden Sparks. The goal of Hidden Sparks, founded in February 2005, is to increase the capacity of Jewish Day Schools to address the varied needs of children with learning difficulties, particularly children whose struggles might otherwise elude identification. Molly is also a learning specialist who has worked in many capacities for All Kinds of Minds, an institute co-founded in 1995 by Dr. Mel Levine and Charles Schwab to help educators work effectively with struggling learners. She is a facilitator for Levine's *Schools Attuned* courses and has worked at the Student Success Center as an evaluator and family advisor.

We thank Hidden Sparks for their sponsoring our Diverse Learners CoP.

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Teachers and school children –
precious jewels of our community
MIDRASH RABBAH, SONG OF SONGS

Setting the Context

What does good
communication with
parents entail?

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Nine Guiding Principles (Levine)

1. A Positive View of Neurodevelopmental Diversity
2. A Stress on Neurodevelopmental Profiles
3. A Quest for Specificity and Individuality in Understanding Students
4. A Policy of Labeling Observable Phenomena Rather than Children
5. A Commitment to Collaboration among Professionals, Parents, and Children
6. A Desire to Strengthen the Strengths and Affinities of Children
7. A Belief in the Value of Demystification
8. A Consistent Effort to Help Learners Learn about Learning
9. An Infusion of Optimism for Kids with All Kinds of Minds

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Rubric for Teacher Communication

Three Components

1. Use of Language

2. Description of Student Performance

3. Plan For Growth

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Use of Language

Use of Tone

Level	Description
4	Uses a positive, hopeful, optimistic tone throughout
3	Uses a positive, hopeful, optimistic tone most of the time
2	Sometimes uses a positive tone
1	Uses mostly a negative tone

Use of Language to Characterize Learning Problems

Level	Description
4	Consistently reflects compassion toward student's learning problems and understanding of student's kind of mind
3	Reflects compassion toward student's learning problems and some understanding of student's kind of mind
2	[Reflects compassion toward student's learning problems, but little understanding of student's kind of mind
1	Blames student for learning problems; reflects no understanding of student's kind of mind

דברים אלו מלמדי
היעקות באמונה
חרוזים אלו התיעקות

Use of Descriptive Language

Level	Description
4	Uses child-specific, carefully chosen descriptive language throughout
3	Uses descriptive language most of the time
2	Uses some descriptive language
1	Uses little if any descriptive language; feels depersonalized

Use of Non-judgmental Language

Level	Description
4	Uses no judgmental language
3	Uses little judgmental language
2	Uses some judgmental language
1	Uses mostly judgmental language

Description of Student Performance

Focus on Strengths and Affinities

Level	Description
4	Elaborates and emphasizes student's strengths and affinities
3	Mentions but does not elaborate on student's strengths and affinities
2	Cites a strength or affinity but follows immediately with a qualification that undercuts its value
1	Makes generic positive comments, such as on personality, but fails to cite any specific strengths or affinities

Focus on Specific Observable Behaviors

Level	Description
4	Consistently describes observable behaviors as evidence for learning strengths and weaknesses
3	Describes observable behaviors as evidence for learning strengths and weaknesses, but not consistently
2	Mixes generic labeling statements with a few descriptions of observable behaviors
1	Uses generic labeling statements and no descriptions of observable behaviors

חברים אלו מלמד
היעקות באמונה
חוזים אלו התעקות

Focus on Neuro-Developmental Terms

Level	Description
4	Consistently discusses observable behaviors in neuro-developmental terms
3	Discusses observable behaviors in neuro-developmental terms, but not consistently
2	Uses some neuro-developmental language but does not make connections to learning behaviors
1	Makes no connection between observable behaviors and neuro-developmental functions

קורים אלו עלמדי
היעקות באמונה
חרוזים אלו התיעקות

Plan for Growth

Promote Alliance Formation

Level	Description
4	Conveys strong sense of an alliance among student, teacher, and parent(s)
3	Conveys some sense of an alliance among student, teacher, and parent(s)
2	Mostly places responsibility for learning on student; little mention of role of teacher and/or parent
1	Places full responsibility for learning on student; no mention of role of teacher and/or parent

Recommend Strategies for Improvement

Level	Description
4	Offers innovative, elaborated strategies, including both interventions & accommodations, to address learning challenges
3	Offers moderately elaborated strategies to address learning challenges
2	Offers some but mostly unelaborated strategies to address learning challenges
1	Offers few, if any, strategies to address learning challenges

Infuse Optimism

Level	Description
4	Conveys strong sense of student's potential and optimism about the future
3	Conveys some sense of student's potential and optimism about the future
2	Conveys some sense of student's potential but mostly focuses on past and present difficulties
1	Conveys little sense of student's potential

Advocate for Collaboration among Educators

Level	Description
4	Offers concrete plans for collaboration among specialists and teachers
3	Discusses collaboration among specialists and teachers
2	Indicates an interest in working with specialists or other teachers
1	Does not mention working with specialists or other teachers

Propose Learning Plan (if applicable)

Level	Description
4	Provides a comprehensive learning plan that addresses all aspects of student's learning profile
3	Provides a learning plan that addresses some aspects of student's learning profile
2	Provides a generic learning plan, not geared toward student's learning profile
1	Does not provide a learning plan

תורים אלו שלשי
היעקות באמונה
חרוזים אלו התיעקות

Benchmark for Comments on Student Progress

- Physical Presence, Gesture, Disposition, and Temperament
- Modes of Thinking and Learning
- Subject/Content Areas
- Conclusions

Parent Teacher Conference Plan

Keep In Mind The 'What' (the Message) And The 'How' (Tone, Examples, Metaphors, Etc...)

- Discuss student strengths (be specific)
- Discuss student weaknesses (provide no more than three; be specific)
- Leverage affinities
- Discuss a plan for growth
- Sum up

In communicating messages to the parent, be sure to consider

- The characteristics of the receiver (cultural, language, family history/dynamics, etc.)
- The characteristics of the sender (your strengths and weaknesses as a communicator; your relationship with the parents, etc.)
- Strategies for checking and reinforcing the effectiveness of the communication (paraphrasing, follow-up meetings, etc.)

Reflection

- How do these strategies compare to the ones you already use?
- How would these strategies meet the needs of your students?
- What would it take to implement?
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Next Steps

What idea or action step will you bring back to your school as a result of today's dialogue?

Contact our Guest

Molly Warner:

mollyw415@aol.com

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Continuing the Conversation

- Join the conversation
- Post a question
- Provide an answer
- Raise a concern
- Share information

STAY TUNED:

***Information regarding a switch to V Bulletin
is imminent.***



תורים אלו שלמדו
תיעוקים באמונה
חרוזים אלו התיעוקים

Future Conference Calls

- April 30, 2007-Technology Tools to Support Literacy Development, Judy Zorfass, PEJE and Education Development Center, Inc.
- June 4, 2007-First Steps to Starting a Program

vBulletin

- To log in to the PEJE Communities of Practice Discussion Boards on vBulletin Forum:
- Go to <http://community.peje.org>
- Enter your User Name. Your User Name is your first name, followed by a space, then your last name (Example: John Smith).
- Enter your default Password and click Log in. (Your default password will be sent to you in a separate email.)

Log in Screen

Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education - Community of Practice Discussion Boards - Powe - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address <http://community.peje.org/vb/index.php> Go Links >>

PEJE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE
Partnership for Excellence In Jewish Education

Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education - Community of Practice Discussion Boards

User Name Remember Me?
Password

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Welcome to the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education - Community of Practice Discussion Boards.

If this is your first visit, be sure to check out the [FAQ](#) by clicking the link above. You may have to [register](#) before you can post: click the register link above to proceed. To start viewing messages, select the forum that you want to visit from the selection below.

Forum	Last Post	Threads	Posts
Mark Forums Read View Forum Leaders			

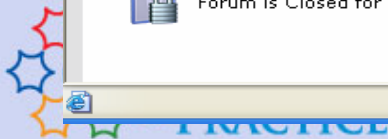
What's Going On?

Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education - Community of Practice Discussion Boards Statistics

Threads: 16, Posts: 45, Members: 363, Active Members: 30
Welcome to our newest member, [pearl mattenson](#)

- Forum Contains New Posts
- Forum Contains No New Posts
- Forum is Closed for Posting

All times are GMT -5. The time now is 03:47 PM.



Forum Threads

PEJE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE
Partnership for Excellence In Jewish Education

Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education - Community of Practice Discussion Boards > Communities of Practice

Israel Education Community of Practice

Welcome, Mary Baker.
You last visited: Today at 03:41 PM
Private Messages: Unread 0, Total 3.

User CP FAQ Members List Calendar New Posts Search Quick Links Log Out

New Thread

Threads in Forum : Israel Education Community of Practice Forum Tools Search this Forum

Announcement: Click here to go to the Israel Education CoP Event Calendar
Dovid Winter (Administrator) Views: 13 02-03-2007

	Thread / Thread Starter	Rating	Last Post	Replies	Views	
	Article from the JTA re: Israel Education Marion Gribetz		Yesterday 10:45 AM by Marion Gribetz	2	8	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Forum posting issue and resolution Michael Rakita		02-22-2007 04:26 PM by Michael Rakita	0	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
	introduce yourself Marion Gribetz		02-15-2007 03:51 PM by Michael Rakita	1	36	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Mission Statements Marion Gribetz		02-07-2007 01:46 PM by Marion Gribetz	1	69	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Conference Call Audio File Michael Rakita		02-07-2007 09:51 AM by Michael Rakita	0	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
	User Guide and 1st Time Login Sheet Michael Rakita		02-06-2007 02:01 PM by Michael Rakita	0	19	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Audio of our conference calls Marion Gribetz		Thread deleted by Marion Gribetz			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Notes from our Conference calls Marion Gribetz		02-04-2007 06:30 PM by Marion Gribetz	0	25	<input type="checkbox"/>

New Thread

Moderation
Delete Threads Go (0)

Display Options Moderators

This is a list of Forum Threads (topics).

Threaded Discussion

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a forum page. At the top left is the PEJE logo and the text 'Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education'. To its right is the 'COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE' logo. The page title is 'Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education - Community of Practice Discussion Boards > Communities of Practice > Israel Education Community of Practice'. Below the title is a navigation bar with links: 'User CP', 'FAQ', 'Members List', 'Calendar', 'New Posts', 'Search', 'Quick Links', and 'Log Out'. A 'Post Reply' button is visible. The main content area shows a threaded discussion. The top post is by Marion Gribetz, dated 02-24-2007, 04:38 PM, with the subject 'Article from the JTA re: Israel Education'. Below it are two replies: one by Cookie Rosenbaum Striar dated 03-05-2007, 11:12 AM, and another by Marion Gribetz dated 'Yesterday, 10:45 AM'. The selected post by Marion Gribetz is expanded to show its content: 'Thought you would all find this article of interest.' Below the text is a preview of an article titled 'Reform youth convention focuses its love on Israel, warts and all' by Ben Harris from PHILADELPHIA (JTA). The article text reads: 'Americans may love a hero, but will they still love a hero showing all its warts? The North American Federation of Temple Youth is betting they will.' To the right of the post is a user profile for Marion Gribetz, identified as a Moderator, with a join date of Jan 2007, location of Sharon, MA, and 7 posts. Thread tools like 'Thread Tools', 'Search this Thread', 'Rate Thread', and 'Display Modes' are visible above the posts.

This is an example of a Thread with posted Replies.