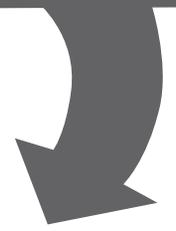




Communicating Effectively With Children



“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15).

- How do you think it felt to be called Jesus’ friend?
- How are you a friend to the children in your class?



▼ Training Session

Communication that’s effective is characterized by shared meaning, mutually satisfying understanding, confident interactions, and results that are palpably positive. You communicate with your words, but with many other tools as well.

Effective communication is physically inviting and warm. Make non-threatening eye contact.

Smile. A lot.

Position yourself at a child’s level. This lowers defenses considerably and paints a picture of openness and caring for a child.

Make sure your gestures are deliberate and full of life and warmth.

Effective communication is about sharing. This doesn’t mean sharing with students what you want to say. That’s preaching. It’s about sharing feelings and responding to the feelings of your children. And it’s about sharing the microphone.

Deliberately pause to listen to a child. This is the best way to show respect for a child’s feelings. When you let children talk, you’re communicating that you really, truly care for their feelings.

When children are hurting, share their feelings.

Rejoice with kids who are happy and excited. By sharing with them in their time of joy, you’re communicating more effectively than you ever would with plain words.

Effective communication is measured. Are you aware of how children perceive you? Continually do a self-check to see how you’re coming across to kids.

Watch body language. If kids are pulling back, maybe your communication is a little harsh. If they’re constantly straining to hear or understand you, perhaps you need to be more clear.

Check the balance of communication. Are you allowing kids to give you honest feedback? Do you let them have a turn to talk and ask questions?

Measuring your communication is a lot like looking in the mirror. Check your focus often.

Effective communication involves laughter and delight. Kids are drawn to those who make them feel great. If you want to engage children, play with them!

Laugh with kids (at the appropriate times).

Involve yourself in their activities. As you participate enthusiastically with kids doing things they enjoy, you’ll deepen your connection with them and open more doors for greater communication. Participate in everything with a sense of delight and enjoyment.

And by all means smile!



Take this training deeper as you think over these questions:

- Rate yourself on the four facets of communication on the other side of this page. Where do you need to improve?
- Is your classroom a laboratory of discovery where conversation is give and take?
- How do you feel when people preach at you? Listen to you?
- When is it hard to smile with children? How can you overcome that?

▼ Journal

*Describe the last class you actually had fun in and smiled a lot.
What were the key ingredients that made it fun?*

Children rarely remember what you say. They rarely remember what you do. But they'll never forget the way you make them feel!

▼ Application

Take turns talking to your spouse or friend by having that person sit while you stand. Then reverse the positions so your spouse or friend is standing while you're sitting.

How did it feel to be the "short" person? Why?

How did it feel to "talk down" to your spouse or friend? Why?