

Relationships:

The Key to Human Success

Úna Barry

Create a Strong Foundation

Get on the Same Page

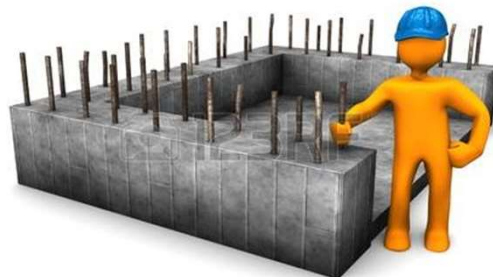
Articulate your shared Vision: (The dream)

Who/what is the focus of your vision?

What kind of impact do you want to make?

Articulate your shared Mission: (The method)

What are the strategies and resources you'll utilize to realize your vision?



Define the Ground Rules

- Define each position and its responsibilities (clear job descriptions).
- Identify the skills each partner brings-how can they be utilized/synced.
- Acknowledge strengths and weaknesses and where each partner can support the other.
- Clearly articulate what each needs from the other to be optimally productive and engaged.
- Determine frequency, content and mode of communication.
- Develop Rules around communications.
- Determine frequency and content of check-ins/reviews related to the vision and mission.

Maintain the relationship

- Maintain a vested interest in your partner's success and well being.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate.
- Give each other the benefit of the doubt.
- Know the areas in which your partner needs support and offer.
- Know when you need support and ask.
- Have fun.

Problems

- Defer assumptions.
- Deal only with the person/people involved
- Approach calmly and thoughtfully.
- Listen actively.
- Ask questions and clarify.
- Make obstacles, fears, doubts known.
- Employ honesty sensitively.
- Listen.

Its you and me
vs. the problem

Not you vs. me

Stay on Track

Regular review/check

- How are we doing?
- Does one or both of us need support?
- Anything we need to discuss?
- Are we meeting enough?

Check the trajectory

- Refine or revise anything that's not working:
- Do we need to reset the course?



The Child/Parent Relationship

- The most significant relationship
 - We can only influence indirectly
 - Modelling
 - Parent observations
 - Education on Montessori
 - Coaching
 - Ongoing Support



Staff's Responsibilities in Partnership with Administration.

- Carry out duties and responsibilities faithfully, energetically and genuinely. (Speak well of every child)
- Be mindful of the bigger picture.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate. (You are the frontline marketer)
- Actively engage in and advocate for the community. Treat colleagues with respect (Speak well of every colleague).
- Be mindful of adherence to policies.

Administration's Responsibilities in Partnership with Staff:

- Treat staff with respect (Speak well of every staff member).
- Make expectations clear.
- Provide staff with the resources and support to carry out their work effectively. (including time to meet)
- Keep staff 'in the loop', and abreast of the strategic focus of the school and the role the staff plays in that process. (Job descriptions)
- Ensure that staff, as much as appropriate, has a voice in decisions that will affect them. (surveys, focus groups, 1 on 1)

Administration's Responsibilities in Partnership with Staff:

- Be accessible to staff and knowledgeable regarding the progress of the classroom.
- Address issues in a timely manner and directly to the staff member.
- Support staff in management of children and parents as necessary.
- Commit, as appropriate and possible, to support staff development and advancement.

Staff's Responsibilities in Partnership with Administration.

- Commit to furthering self-development.
- Understand how your work fits into the big picture.
- Go to administration with concerns/issues and do not telegraph discontent far and wide.
- Alert the administration to the need for particular intervention with a child or parent and keep the administration abreast of progress.
- Alert the administration in a timely manner to any situation that may arise with a parent or child that may come to the administration.
- Roll with the punches. Be optimistic and solution oriented.

Teacher's Responsibilities in Partnership with the Assistant:

Set your partner up for success:

- Educate constantly on philosophy, materials, approach.
- Provide clear proactive guidelines on expectations.
- Provide consistent, constructive feedback and guidance.
- Maintain a regular, open channel of non-judgmental communication.
- Go directly to your partner with any issues/grievances, do not broadcast far and wide.

Teacher's Responsibilities in Partnership with the Assistant:

- Capitalize on your partner's skills and talents.
- Do not leave the 'discipline' to your partner.
- Solicit your partner's thoughts on children and the operations of the environment and listen. (observations)
- Share the work of maintaining the classroom.
- Validate your partners contributions.
- Ask if you can help, and how, when times are tough.
- Laugh together. Smile at each other. Enjoy.

Teacher's Responsibilities in Partnership with the Assistant:

- Model a positive, respectful and warm relationship.
- Imagine your life without your assistant/partner!
- Ask: Your partner or your 'help'?

Assistant's Responsibilities in Partnership with the Teacher:

- Model for the child a positive, respectful and warm relationship.

Assistant's Responsibilities in Partnership with the Teacher:

Commit	Commit to educating yourself on all aspects of Montessori philosophy.
Observe	Observe, ask questions and listen.
Learn	Learn the names of the materials and their purpose.
Be	Be a second pair of eyes, observe and document.
Preserve	Preserve your partner's attention on lessons.
Promote	Promote independence. Remember, you are assistant to the teacher, not the children

Assistant's Responsibilities in Partnership with the Teacher:

- Go
 - Go directly to your partner with any issues/grievances, do not broadcast far and wide.
- Do not
 - Do not play favorites with the children.
- Sit
 - Sit whenever possible.
- Observe and document
 - Observe and document when possible, then share.
- Laugh
 - Laugh together. Smile at your partner. Enjoy.

What would the child
ask of you?

The Adult/Child Relationship

Build a relationship with me that will sustain us in our tough times.

- Know me. Observe
- Like/love me-want the best for me. Have faith in your desire to want the best
- Give me a fresh start every day
- Give me the benefit of the doubt
- Have confidence in me
- Make sure I know you have my back.
- Persevere with me
- Practice Humility-I possess tremendous powers that you have lost. Respect and trust those powers



The Adult/Child Relationship

Problems?

First places to look:

- The environment
- You
- Home

Then

- Connect
- Empathize
- Joint problem solving




Adult's Responsibilities to the child:

- Respect
- Authenticity
- Love
- Trust
- Empathy
- Acceptance
- Commitment

Adult Responsibilities to the child:

- Model a relationship that is respectful, kind, supportive warm and joyful and always authentic.
- Observe, observe, observe. Know when he needs you and when he doesn't.
- Ensure the child knows that you have his/her back.
- Look behind a behavior to discover what the child is trying to tell you.



**THE KIDS WHO NEED
THE MOST LOVE
WILL ASK FOR IT IN
THE MOST UNLOVING
OF WAYS.**

You are in a position of great power

“I am the decisive element in my classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that dictates whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, a child humanized or dehumanized.”

Haim Ginott

Parents Responsibility in Partnership with the Teacher:

- Provide
 - Provide insight into your child's life and mode at home
- Access and engage
 - Access and engage in as many learning opportunities as possible
- Implement
 - Implement Montessori principals at home
- Provide
 - Provide day to day information that may affect the child's experience while in school
- Come
 - Come to the teacher directly and proactively with concerns, do not broadcast far and wide
- Give
 - Give the benefit of the doubt

What do Parents Want?

- They want to know that their child is safe
- They want to know that you know and like their child.
- They want to know that you know and like their child.
- They want to know that you know and like their child.
- They want to know if their child is progressing as they should
- They want to know that you will alert them to a problem
- They want to know that you are accessible

Parents who need lots of hand holding

- Frequent proactive communication, primarily positive,
- Lots of anecdotes illustrating that you know and like their child
- Provide simple, clear, parenting guidelines-
- NEVER TALKDOWN TO PARENTS
- Careful, gentle communication regarding concerns with an emphasis on team work to support the child and the positive results of intervention.

Parents Who do the Necessary

- Regular proactive communication
- Anecdotes that illustrate you know and like their child
- Look for feedback after parent observations and conferences
- Factual communication regarding concerns with an emphasis on:
 - the plan,
 - the parent support
 - and the outcome after intervention

Parents You Never See

- Regular proactive communication
- Anecdotes illustrating that you know and like their child
- Encouragement to tell you about their child at home
- Encouragement to attend conferences and parent education
- Accommodate them regarding ways to communication
- Approach, touching, tone of voice, body language

What Does Proactive Communication Look Like?

- It can deliver positive or negative information
- It is specific
- It is preceded by attention to detail and information gathering

Proactive, Proactive, Proactive Communication

If related to a concern it communicates:

- The importance of the parent/school partnership in addressing the concern
- a pattern of behavior,
- the intervention used and
- the results of the intervention
- a proposed plan if appropriate.

Proactive, Proactive, Proactive Communication

Requires

- thought on how it is to be presented.
- a decision regarding the primary function of communication
 - Touch point
 - Follow up – rumor, post conference
 - Gather information
 - Relate a concern
 - Offer/provide support

Proactive, Proactive, Proactive Communication

- What does it achieve?
 - It decreases parents anxiety. They feel you are on top of things
 - It helps them develop trust in, and respect for you
 - Trust and respect creates more responsiveness and more support when an issue arises
 - Trust and respect turns into advocacy with other parents
 - Trust and respect gives you the benefit of the doubt

Getting to Know your Parent

- Read any documentation from the admissions process.
- Personally encourage attendance at parent orientations-school/class.

First Meeting

- Introductory conversation-document and keep as a reference
 - Tell me about your child
 - Tell me about him at home
 - What are your hopes for your child?
 - What are your expectations of your child's experience in my classroom
 - Do you have anything of which you like would like me to be particularly aware?
 - What is the one thing you would like me to know about your child?
 - How would you like to communicate?-provide options
 - How would you like to support the class?
 - Do you have any questions for me?

Things to Notice and Document

- Anxieties
- Baggage
- Ideas to connect the parent to the class
- What will this parents communication needs be?

Availability, Communication Options

- Check with each parent regarding their preferred mode of communication
- Offer various times and days
- Create a plan to systematically contact each parent regularly as a touch point-Monthly?

The Parent Teacher Conference

- Preparation-questionnaire
- Ask questions; listen
- No new information
- No major problems that have not already been discussed
- Demonstrate with materials
- Show samples of the child's work if appropriate
- Be alert for baggage, yours and the parents
- Always check in at the end "have we spoken about everything you wanted"
- Set up follow up communication if there are any outstanding matters to discuss.

Communicating Concerns

- Document, document, document, use this to identify patterns
- Never talk about a concern on the phone, on the run, by email, in the hallway; always in person
- Insist that both parents be available to talk
- Always have someone else from staff present
- Know what you want to achieve in the meeting
- Present: 1) the concern 2) the intervention 3) the response to intervention 4) the change you would like to see.
- Be specific, give examples

Communicating Concerns

- Always ask,
 - "Can you shed any light on this particular behavior/response/situation"
 - Formulate specific, practical strategies (avoid overwhelming the parent, keep it simple and clear)
 - Leave with a plan and a date for follow up

Respectful Communication -a two way street

- Never make parents feel inadequate in their parenting:
 - they are the experts on their children.
 - Request information and listen carefully to their input.

- Never allow a parent to intimidate you:
 - Worried about a meeting; have someone join you.
 - Disrespectful parents: Stop the meeting.

Up-Front Topics for Presentation

- Cover core parenting topics with parents early in the year in group presentations:
 - Montessori in the Home/for Life
 - Promoting independence
 - Setting Limits/boundaries
 - Rewards and Punishment
 - Development of Self discipline

THEN

Find Opportunities for Parenting Support

- ☐ Every touch point with parents is an opportunity to educate:
 - Victim stories-ask what is the parents response
 - Boundaries
 - Rewards and punishment
 - Independence

Two Pillars

Your job has two pillars;

the child
and the parent.

Developing a relationship with each child and each parent is the essential key to the success of our work on behalf of the child.

Effective communication is the key to successful relationships.

Homework

- With your partners:
 - Clearly articulate your shared vision and mission and what each one will commit to bring to the partnership.
 - Tell your partner what you need from them to function well and provide the best model for the child.
 - Give each other the benefit of the doubt so that you're children will do the same, nurturing respect, trust, communication and healthy relationships for life.

Your healthy relationships lived in the presence of the child, lays the foundation for his well-being, health and happiness in life.