

# Communication Strategies

## **COMMUNICATION IS KEY**

When we learn a student's way of communicating we can help their behavior. Students who do not speak or express themselves regularly often have special behavioral needs. One reason is because they don't have the tools to let adults understand what they need. Below are some strategies to help providers encourage wanted behaviors. It starts with the way **YOU** communicate with each and all of the students.

1. Have a routine that all the students can learn.

- Use a **schedule**. Many adults don't like to be surprised; your students are no different. When a schedule is followed consistently, students know what to expect and can follow the flow of events. You will find that the type of schedule will depend on the group you are using it for.

2. Remember to **praise** in public and redirect in **private**

- Students behave because they get something they like out of doing it. So, when a student does something good, praise them in front of the group. This encourages self-esteem and encourages others to try to get the same reaction from the adult in charge.
- Remember to redirect in a respectful manner. A redirection is a non-offensive way to let the student understand the need for a behavior change. Always use redirection as a means to let children know "You can't do that now but you can do this." Also remember to redirect in private, not in front of the whole group.

3. Choose your words carefully, avoid the **Power Struggle!**

- When you make a request, make sure the student follows through the **first time** you ask. Try not to repeat yourself because the students all learn that they don't have to listen the first time an adult asks them to do something.
- Avoid using the word "NO." Tell adolescents what they CAN do. A great way to do this is by giving choices. For example, "We are not using computers right now, you can play a board game or read silently."
- The use of threats encourages Power Struggles. You are the authority in the classroom, students already understand this concept. Be a respectful leader.
  - Avoid asking "**WHY?**" questions. Asking why prompts excuses for negative behavior. Instead ask questions using "What?" to encourage solutions (critical thinking skills). For example, "What do you need right now, or, What can I do to help you



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