



Effective Communication and Active Listening

Presented by: Advocates for Justice and
Education, Inc.



Agenda

You will learn:

- I. Why effective communication is important*
- II. How to improve your communication skills to be successful at interacting with others*
- III. Tips for good communication at a school meeting*
- IV. Strategies for using written communication*
- V. How to address disagreements between parents, and agencies or service providers*



Components of Communication

- A. Verbal Messages** ~ The words we choose
- B. Paraverbal Messages** ~ How we say the words
- C. Nonverbal Messages** ~ Our body language



+ Why is Effective Communication Important?

- The way you talk to others has a direct relationship to how they interact with you.
- It can make a **positive** difference when you are advocating for your child and perhaps what services your child will receive.





Effective Communication

Involves...

- ✓ Active Listening
- ✓ Direct Expression
- ✓ Body Language and Non-Verbal communication
- ✓ Managing Emotions
- ✓ Positive Dialogue



Active Listening

■ Nonverbal

- Full physical attention to the speaker (eye contact, head nodding)
- Awareness of the speaker's nonverbal messages

■ Verbal

- Paying attention to the words and feelings that are being expressed
- Using reflective listening tools such as paraphrasing, reflecting, summarizing, and questioning to increase your understanding





Direct Expression

- Speak clearly when expressing what you think, feel, or want for your child in a clear and non-defensive way.
- Use “I” statements to express what you think or feel without inadvertently placing blame on others.
- For example:

Instead of: ***“You’re not listening to me.”***

You say: ***“I don’t feel like I’m being heard.”***



Direct Expression

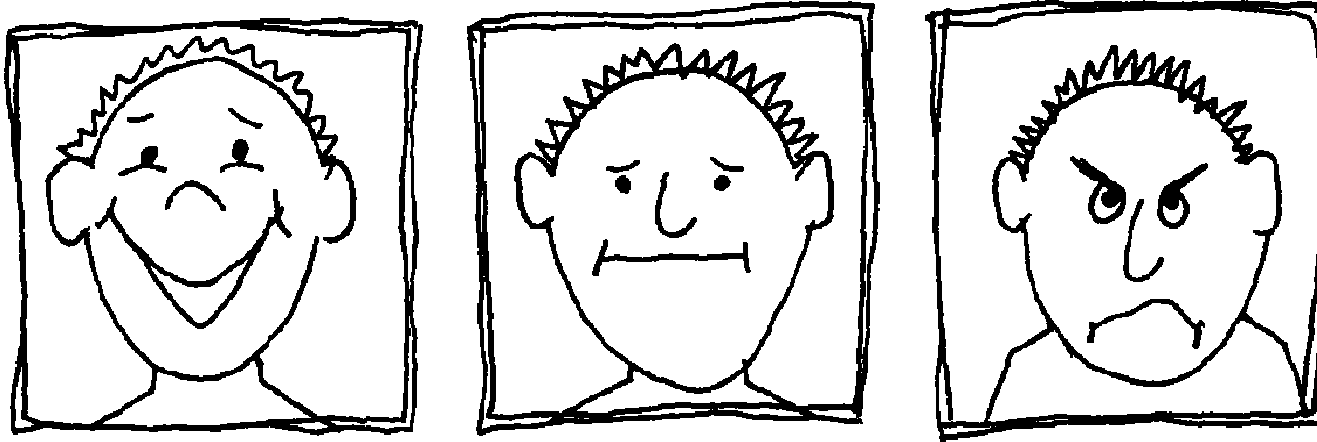
- When requesting a specific service for your child, describe **WHY** or **HOW** that particular service will help.
- Don't criticize
 - With each criticism defensiveness ↑ (increases) and listening ↓ (decreases).
- Give positive feedback and as often as possible.
- Turn negatives into positives!





Body Language

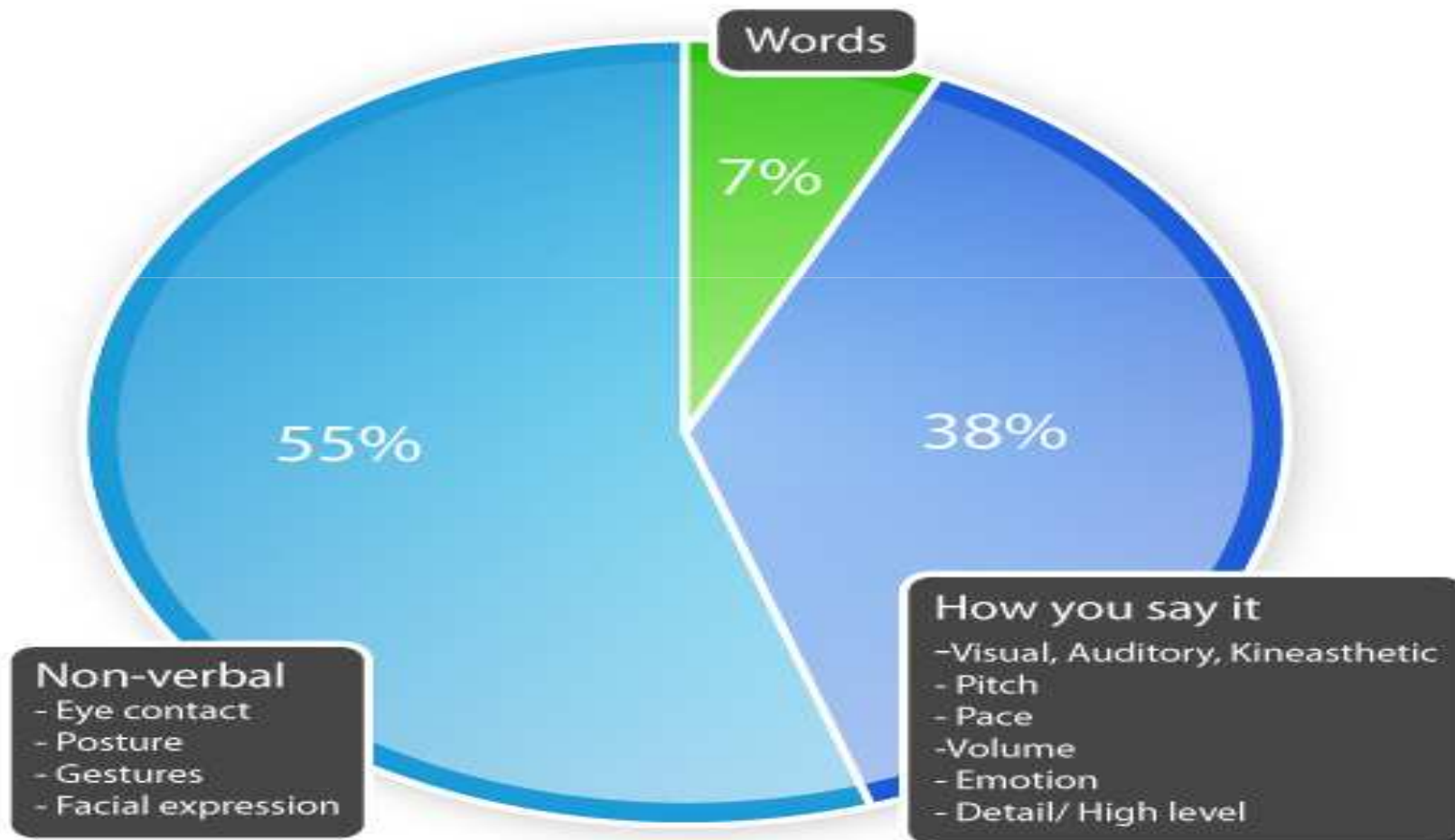
- Do not underestimate the power of non-verbal communication!
 - It is the primary way we communicate our emotions. Be aware of your body language and what it might communicate to others
- A. Facial Expression (e.g., eye rolling)
- B. Postures and Gestures (e.g., finger pointing)
- C. Stance or movements of arms, hands and legs (e.g., crossed, uncrossed)





Effective Communication

93% of what people take from our communication is
NON-VERBAL





Managing Emotions



- When advocating for appropriate services for your child, you are likely to experience feelings of frustration that can be expressed as anger.
- Remember, if you behave with anger, others will likely only remember that you were angry, not that you had good points or valid requests to improve your child's education.



Developing Positive Dialogue

- Dialogue is a discussion or conversation, thoughtful exchange about a particular subject matter between two or more people.
- Skills to promote positive dialogue include:
 - Allowing others to finish their thoughts.
 - Respecting others' thoughts, feelings, views and realities, even when they differ from your own
 - Listen deeply without needing to argue or resist.



Effective Communication

Tips for Good Communication at a School Meeting

- Focus on your goal
- Show respect and expect it from others
- Manage your emotions
- Ask questions
- Rephrase for clarification
- Say “Thanks”





Effective Communication

Resolving Disagreements

- Disagree without being disagreeable
- Apologize if needed
- Separate the person from the problem
- Realize NO ONE PERSON has all the answers
- Make sure your facts are accurate
- Choose your battles!
- Problem solve together to find solutions
- Focus on the needs of the CHILD





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Written Communication

- Always – PUT IT IN WRITING!

“If it’s not in writing, it doesn’t exist”



Written Communication

Letters or emails should:

- Be sent to person who can make a change
- Be dated and signed
- Focus on one or two issues
- Be no longer than one page
- Set a deadline if you're requesting a reply
- Give your current contact information
- ✓ **VERY IMPORTANT to keep a copy for your records**





Written Communication

Written Communication can be used when:

- Making a request (educational records, meeting, etc)
- Asking for clarification from school officials
- Asking for a decision
- Saying thank you
- Documenting a verbal discussion
- Documenting meeting minutes

+ In Summary

Effective Communication....



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- Is a shared and even exchange of dialogue
- Involves active listening
- Is verbal and non-verbal
- Promotes feedback
- Should be clear and concise
- Is **IMPORTANT** when advocating for your child's education!



“When you doubt your power, you
give power to your doubt”

~Honore De Balzac



Use Your Power



For More Information

Call or Visit AJE!

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