

Family-School Collaboration and PBS

Applications at the School-wide Level

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For posting on DE-PBS Website

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Family School Collaboration

What's Happening in Your School Already?

- **Step 1:** Find your school on the wall.
- **Step 2:** Write down as many activities, strategies, and techniques that are in use at your school that are examples of family-school collaboration.



Overview of Training

- Introduction/background
- Thinking systemically
 - CORE Model of Collaboration
- Communication strategies
- Schoolwide collaborative activities
- Family school conferencing
- Action planning



Benefits of Families to Education

- **For Kids:**
 - *Improved attitudes, self-esteem, and behavior*
 - *Improved grades and test scores*
 - *Better attendance, fewer dropouts and suspensions, more post-secondary education*



Benefits of Families to Education

- **For Parents:**
 - *Greater understanding of how schools work*
 - *Improved communication between parents and children about school work*
 - *Increased involvement with learning activities at home*



Benefits of Families to Education


- **For Educators:**

- *Greater job satisfaction*
- *Higher ratings of teaching skills from both parents and principals*
- *Higher ratings of school effectiveness*



Benefits of Families to Education

- There is increasing evidence of a CAUSAL relationship between parents' participation and achievement
- Parents' efforts lead to increase child engagement that leads to improved achievement



“Blame for the separation of schools and homes has been thrown around freely and placed with considerable bitterness...It is the fault of **principals**, of **teachers**, of **parents**, of lack of time, of lack of money...This blaming is most unfortunate...The fact of the matter is, parents and teacher just haven't known how to get along together...”

Bess Lane, 1948



How Can We Get Productive Working Relationships with Families?

(Are our current activities
“traditional” or “collaborative”?)

Traditional vs. Collaborative Approaches

Unidirectional

Educators:

- design family-school activities, **without parent consultation**, to help the school achieve its goals.
- **summon** parents to school to hear information, not to contribute information.

“We want you to....”

Transactional

Educators:

- work together with families to develop plans that advance the shared goal of school success.
- acknowledge and consider the beliefs, and preferences of children and their families.

“How can we....”



Views of Parental Involvement in Schooling-Collaborative

Expert-Driven

Educators:

- are experts about the child and the child's problems;
parents are learners.
- **tell parents** how to assist the school in fixing the child and/or how they should assist with homework.

**“I will tell you
how...”**

Multiple Expertise

Educators:

- presume that each person, including the child, has important information to share.
- accept that each individual may have different, and equally valid, perceptions of the same situation.

**“Help me
understand..”**



All stakeholders have expertise to bring to the process of education

- **Parents** have far more experience with their children and can offer useful suggestions
- **Teachers** offer expertise on instructional methods that can be adapted given what they learn from families.
- **Mental health professionals, administrators, and others** also may bring alternate perspectives and communication and problem-solving expertise to the process.
- **Children** know what their strengths and weaknesses are and these can be elicited.

Traditional vs. Collaborative Approaches to PI

Universal

Educators:

- **recommend** to families how to improve family participation in school; these apply to all families.

“One size fits all.”

Individualized

Educators:

- know that each family, teacher, classroom, and child is different. They respect these differences when planning interventions.
- assume that families who do not participate care about their children’s education and have good reasons for their behavior.

“Each child, family, teacher, classroom is unique.”



Partial list of resources needed to “help with homework”

- **Communication options**

Do parents have opportunities to communicate with the teacher (e.g., transportation and childcare for at school meetings; availability of a telephone)?

- **Knowledge, skills, confidence**

Do parents feel competent to help? Do they have the skills to help?
Do they know how to set up a learning environment at home?

- **Time & energy**

Do their other responsibilities leave time and energy to engage in learning activities at home?

- **Beliefs**

Do parents believe that homework is part of their role or do they delegate that role to the school?

- **Space and materials**

Are pens, paper, dictionaries (computers?) available in the home? Is there physically room in the home for a “homework space”?



Main message...

Without first learning **FROM**
families about their strengths,
resources, beliefs, and needed
supports,
no programs **FOR** families will be
successful.



Communication

- Frequent
- Positive
- Bi-directional





Collaboration: a **COOPERATIVE** relationship...

In which system members share both the power and the responsibility needed to support child success



It is an approach that includes each family in the education of their children in ways congruent with the family's values, goals, and culture.



...and a **BALANCED** relationship!

- **Parents-** assume responsibilities within their roles as parents (not professional educators)
- **Educators-** assume responsibilities within their roles as instructors (not parent substitutes).
- **Students-** assume their responsibilities as learners




Collaboration

In the first year, I thought family-school collaboration was having meetings with the child, parents, and school staff when the child was having trouble in school.

In the second year, I revised that and thought that family-school collaboration was changing our parent-teacher conferences to include children.

In the third year, I revised that and thought that family-school collaboration was about climate-building activities that involved the whole school.

Now I realize it's none of these things. Family-school collaboration is a process, a philosophy, that pervades everything you do in the school



How Does Family School Collaboration Fit With PBS?





Family-School Collaboration in the Context of Positive Behavior Support

Intensive

Students with intense behavior problems (1-7%)

Strategies below applied specifically to FBA/BSP and other intensive approaches

Targeted

Students at risk for problem behaviors (5-15%)

Strategies below plus Problem-Solving Meetings

School wide

Students without serious behavior problems (80-90%)

Systems thinking

Proactive Communication

Outreach Strategies

Family-School Conferences

Family participation in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-wide discipline plan

Overview of Skills/Strategies

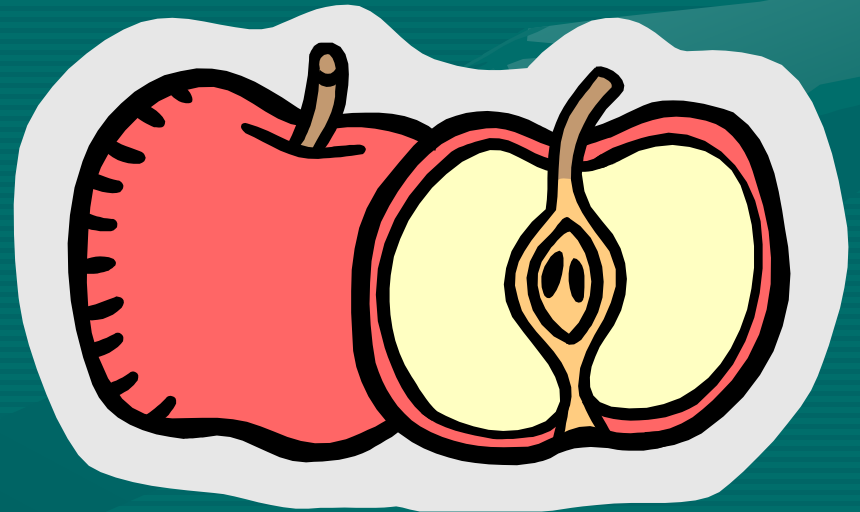
The CORE Model of Collaboration


*C*onnected

*O*ptimistic

*R*espected

*E*mpowered





Overview of Skills/Strategies

The CORE Model of Collaboration

- ***THINKING DIFFERENTLY***
- *Systems Theory*

- ***TALKING DIFFERENTLY***
- *7 Communication Strategies*

- ***BEHAVING DIFFERENTLY***
- *School-wide outreach strategies*
- *Conferencing*



Home Alone



Directions: Watch the
movie clip; takes
notes on your assignment *

* NOTE: Not everyone
has the same assignment!



Home Alone


- Would you agree that identifying problems is an easier task than identifying strengths, especially during chaos?
- If we had a chance to talk to this family about what happened, which set of descriptions do you think would be more likely to promote positive change?
- If you spent the next week watching your family members and identifying every strength (of the family unit and of individuals) you could, how do you think that would change your view of your family? Change your behavior?



System's Theory

*Systems are units,
composed of sets of interrelated parts,
that act in organized, interdependent ways
to promote the adaptation or survival of
the whole unit.*

-Pianta



Try to change
anything
and you will find it
connected to
everything
else in the universe.

-John Muir



System's Principles

✓ Wholeness

✓ Patterns of Interaction



Wholeness

Subsystems (system parts) are organized in an interdependent whole

Each member affects,
and is affected by, every other member...

- When a member is added, subtracted or changes behavior in some way, the entire system reorganizes to accommodate the change.
- System as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts



Behavioral Patterns of Interaction

**Behavior occurs
in circular patterns;
each system member
contributes.**

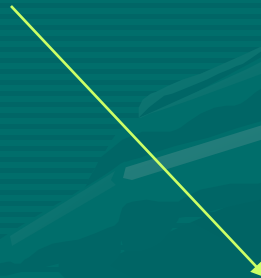
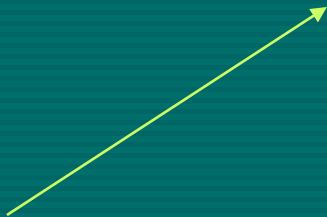


Family Example

Mom
criticizes dad

Child cries
to mom

Dad yells
at child





Characteristics of Behavioral Patterns of Interaction

Circularity = Repetitive cycles in which the same outcomes occur repeatedly

a to b to c to a

Patterns are interdependent; each shaping behavior of the other in a reciprocal way, continually reinforcing certain behaviors

Family Example

Mom
criticizes dad



Child cries
to mom

Dad yells
at child



Characteristics of Behavioral Patterns of Interaction

Punctuation = View of reality reflected by arbitrary starting point.

The place in the cycle where we choose to begin describing interactions provides a **particular view of reality**; there are different views.



Behavioral Patterns of Interaction

- **Patterns evolve** –
 - It isn't that we think or say , "oh we'll develop this pattern" -- or **even that everyone is consciously aware of it.**
- Patterns that are developed and maintained over time influence individual behavior



Behavioral Patterns of Interaction

Significance #1:

No Blame!!!

You cannot know
who began the sequence

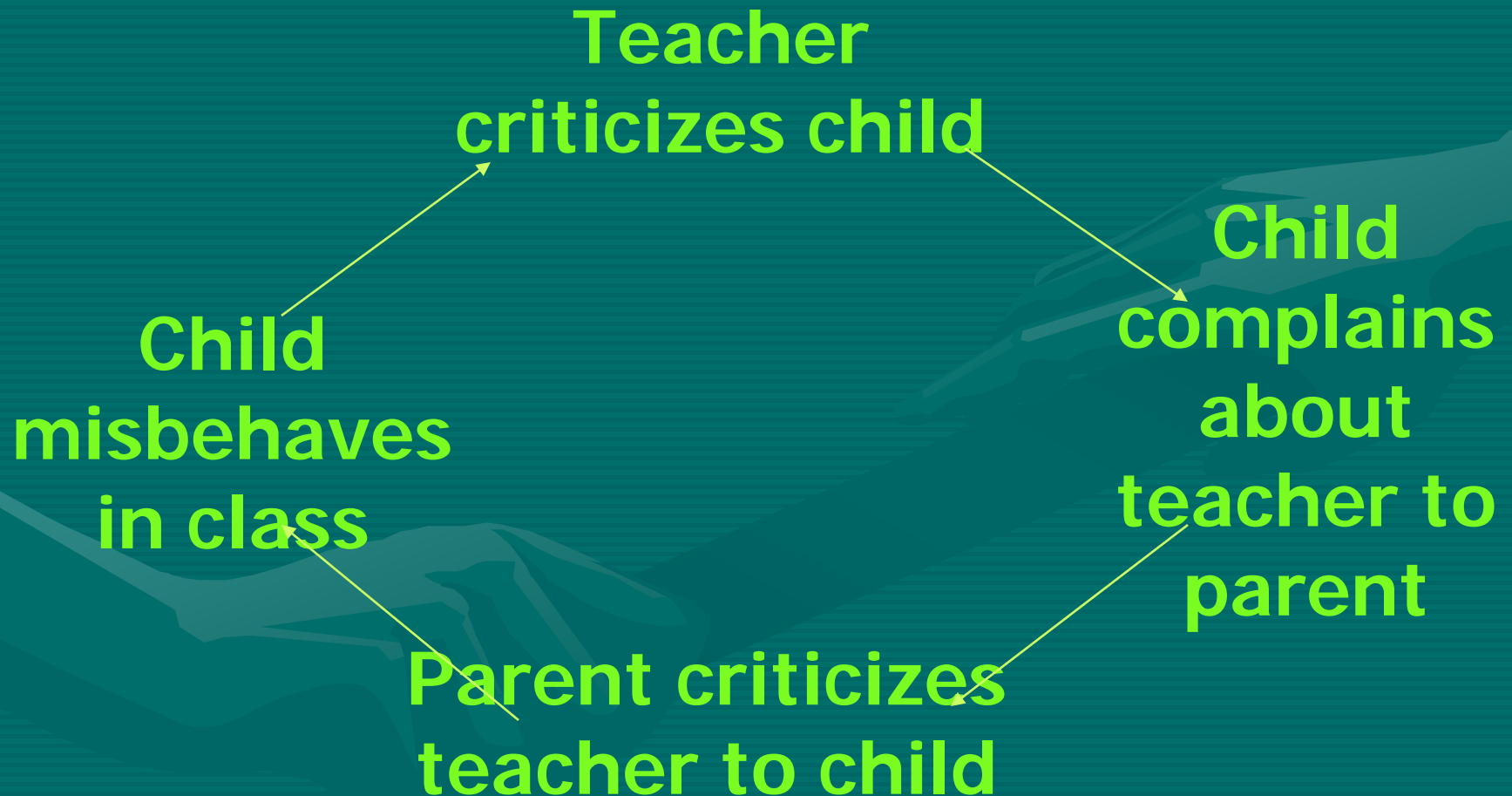


Behavioral Patterns of Interaction

Significance #2:

Intervention is possible at any point in the circle.

Behavior Problem example from systemic view





Thinking about Problems: Process

The system's view

- stops the search for "causes"
- focuses on the ways in which each person's behavior supports maintenance of the problem.

In collaborative, systems approaches, we don't ask:

"Why is this child having this problem?"

Rather, we ask:

"How is this problem being maintained and what can each person do to make changes in the patterns?"



Thinking about Problems: Solutions

- Solutions
 - ü There are **multiple perspectives** from which to view the same situation and each leads to different alternatives in the search for solutions.
 - ü System's perspective looks for solutions based on **interrupting the pattern** and on individual abilities and resources.



CORE Goal

Following any encounter with one another,
families and educators will leave the experience
feeling

connected,

optimistic,

respected,

and

empowered.



Activity 2

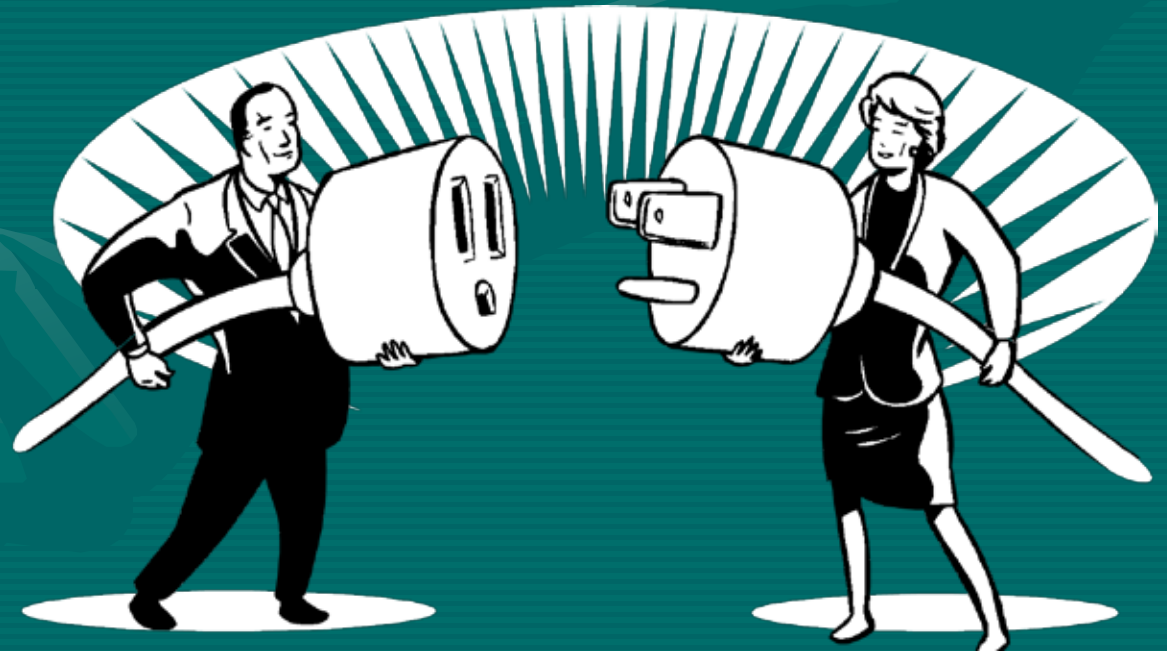
CORE Beliefs Discussion

- **Step 1:** Read the CORE beliefs and mark one belief you find best fits your approach to families. Then mark one belief that you find most challenging in working with families.
- **Step 2:** Working in pairs, discuss your selections with your partner. What makes the challenging belief so challenging?
- **Step 3:** Brainstorm ways that you might “think differently” to allow that belief to become part of your work with families.

CORE: Elements & Beliefs

Connect =

Developing Trusting Relationships





1 Trust develops when parties feel valued, listened to, and understood

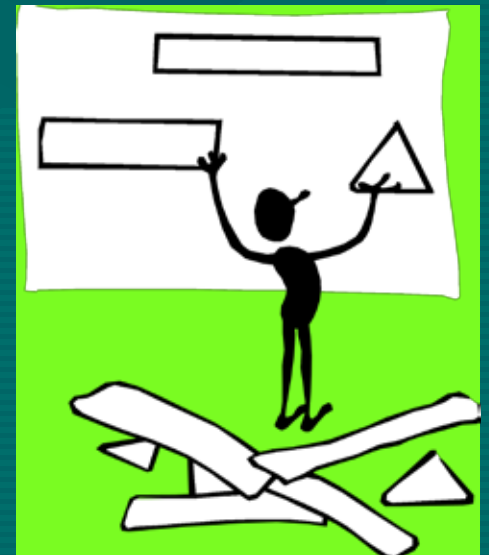
- ✓ Use clear & open communication
- ✓ Develop shared beliefs and goals
- ✓ Use differences constructively to accomplish shared goals.

Trust is accomplished through
**optimism, respect, and
empowerment.**

CORE: Elements & Beliefs

Optimism =

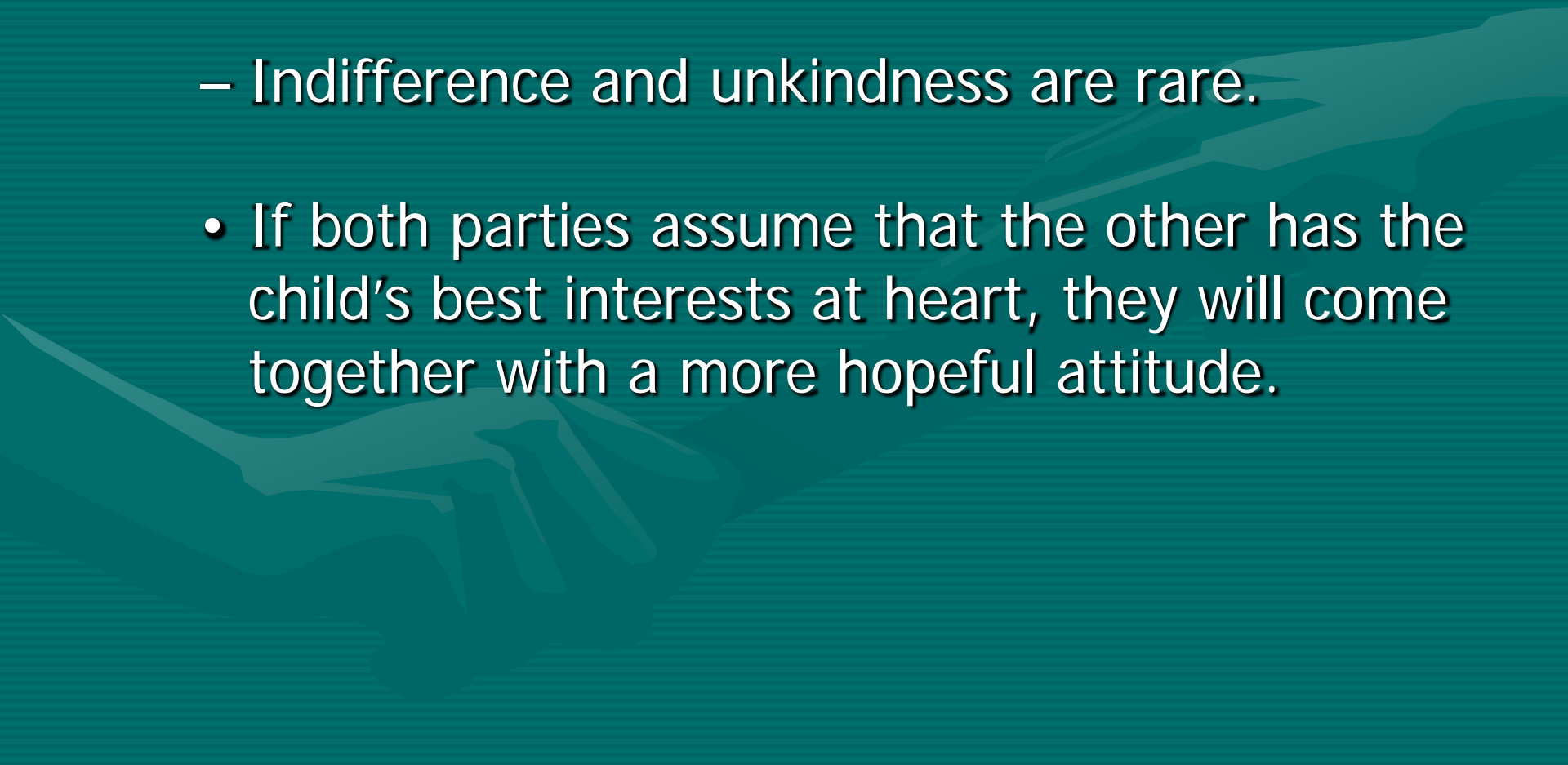
Embracing the possibilities of change and assuming that each person has the ability to learn and to change.





2

Each person does the best he/she can.

- Indifference and unkindness are rare.
 - If both parties assume that the other has the child's best interests at heart, they will come together with a more hopeful attitude.
- 



3

No one person is to blame

Avoiding blame makes it easier to take a more optimistic view of parents, teachers, and students.





**How do the concepts of
patterns of interactions and
punctuation
instruct us about blame?**

**Are "blame" and "responsibility"
synonymous terms?**



Why do we blame?

- § Blame is a conditioned response
- § Blame is pre-emptive
- § Blaming is not as hard as problem-solving
- § It is natural to attribute problems to factors outside our control

Why We Blame

The person who blames...

- avoids being blamed
- Avoids feeling responsible for change

BUT THE DOWNSIDE...

The person who feels **blamed...**
typically feels **anger, resentment**
Often “digs in their heels” and becomes
even **less likely to change**



What to do if I catch myself blaming?

- assume that people's behavior makes sense from their frame of reference (they ARE doing the best they can!)
- try to understand in what ways a particular behavior supports the system's stability
- look forward to solutions; rather than backward for causes.

4

Problems are system problems;
successes are system successes.

- Whether the process is positive or negative all system members contribute.





CORE: Elements & Beliefs

Respect =

Acknowledging that each person is trustworthy, concerned & caring with the right to differing values.



**Individuals have a right to
different perspectives...**





5

Each person is both an expert and a learner.

Participants bring complementary expertise regarding the success of the student to the table.

Parents may not share...WHY???

What can we do?

Less teaching & telling:

More asking & learning



6

Children are active participants

- **Why?**

Because they are central parts of the *mesosystem*

- **Child's opportunities to:**

- witness adults working together on their behalf
- hear adults' expectations.
- share their expectations of the adults.
- be active contributors to any plans for change that are made.
- avoid misunderstandings & misperceptions.



If you are considering excluding the child, ask yourself:

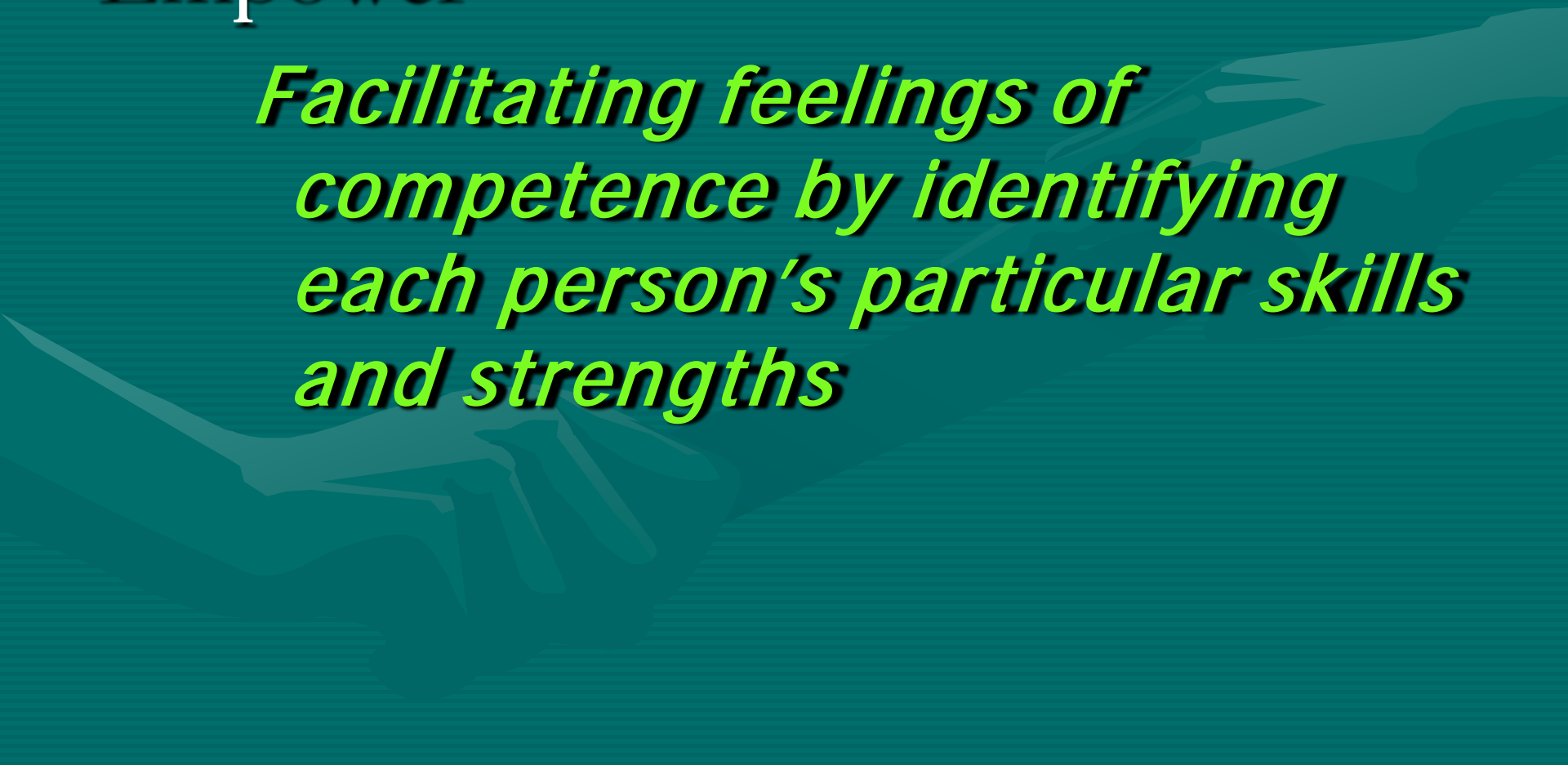
1. Is the information I don't want to share in front of the student important in helping her succeed in my classroom?
2. If so, how can the discussion be framed so that it does not harm the student?"



CORE: Elements & Beliefs

Empower =

*Facilitating feelings of
competence by identifying
each person's particular skills
and strengths*





Advantages of Empowerment

- **Emphasizes**

- skills and strengths
- what needs to be done differently

- **De-emphasizes**

- deficits

- **No one person must be the “expert”**

Rather than “teaching and telling,” we can focus on “listening and understanding”.



7

Power, responsibility, decision-making and action are shared.

- Provide participants with opportunities to demonstrate their skills and competencies
 - Increase self-confidence of all parties; help them express their views; encourage participation in the development/enactment of plans for continued success
 - Assume that families who seem different are not deficient in some way



8

Advice is avoided - it is disempowering

Why do we give advice?

Two categories of advice:



solicited
unsolicited



Advice is avoided - it is disempowering

- **Solicited**- Parent requests advice about how to handle child at home.

The Responsibility Ball!

- We feel obligated to offer suggestions.
- We are set up for failure! **WHY?**



Advice is avoided - it is disempowering

- **Unsolicited** - We offer without being asked.

Fatal assumption: *"If a parent isn't doing their job, we must try to do it for them."*

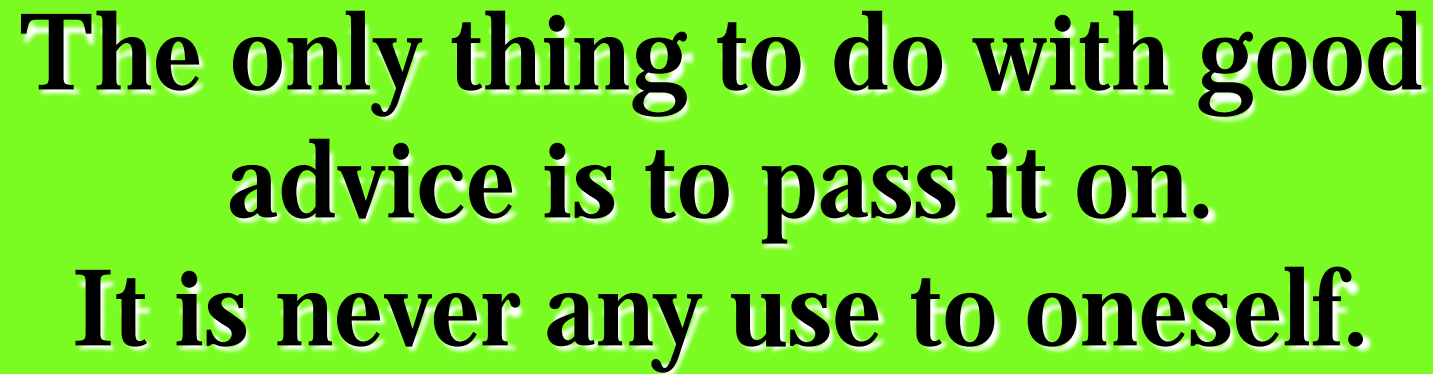
– **WHY?**

– ***What do we do instead?***



Disadvantages of Disempowering (advice)

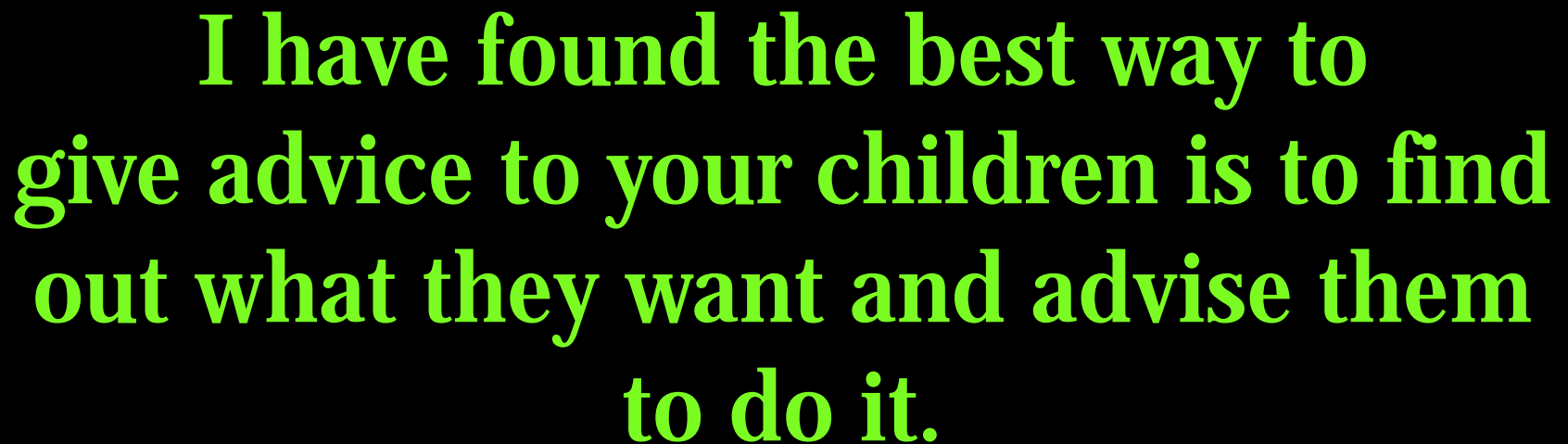
- **Advice becomes primary intervention.**
- **Advice relieves all others (parents & child) of responsibility for solution.**
- **Advice defeats collaboration.**



The only thing to do with good
advice is to pass it on.
It is never any use to oneself.

Harry S. Truman

Oscar Wilde



I have found the best way to
give advice to your children is to find
out what they want and advise them
to do it.