

Activity 1: Bla-bla-bla¹

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: None

Objective: To experience miscommunication. To identify resources and strategies to ensure effective communication.

Procedure: Divide into groups of 3 or 4. You will have five minutes to prepare a dramatization of a meeting between members of the school (e.g. teacher, administrator) and a parent or parents. This could be a real meeting that you have experienced or a fictional one. Possible scenarios include a student having difficulty in class, a student getting into fights, a student not participating in group activities, or a first time meeting between a teacher and parents.

When you perform your dramatization you may not use English. The only spoken words that you can use are 'bla-bla-bla'. Observe the other groups as they perform. Pay attention to any nonverbal clues or gestures used in the drama and see if you can understand the scenario being performed.

Discussion:

- How easy was it to understand the story line of each scenario?
- What was the overall 'feeling' in each scenario?
- What were any nonverbal forms of communication used in the scenarios?
- Which scenario, if any, was the easiest to understand? Why?
- Which scenario, if any, was the most difficult to understand? Why?
- Why might communication break down?
- How might cultural differences impact communication?
- How might language differences impact communication?
- What could you do to ensure effective communication?
- What resources or strategies could you use to 'fix' the scenarios?

¹This activity idea was adapted from the "Communication Games" section of the UWC *Short Course Graduate Network* website. This activity can be viewed at <http://uwsc.uwc.org/resources/Games/Communication.rtf>

Activity 2: Types of Communication with Parents

Time: Two weeks

Materials: Pen/pencil, “Home-School Communications Observation Chart” handout

Objective: To observe how educators at your school communicate with parents.

Procedure: Spend one week observing and collecting samples (past and present) of types of communication with parents. Use the enclosed “Home-School Communications Observation Chart” to help keep track of your observations. Answer the questions and complete the follow-up exercise on the page provided.

Home-School Communications Observation Chart

Type of communication with parents	Example	Purpose of communication	Was this type of communication successful? (Yes, No, or Maybe)
Formal communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • memos • phone calls • newsletters • conferences • parent-teacher association meetings 			
Informal communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations before or after class 			
Other			

Look at the completed chart and ask yourself the following questions:

- What type of communication was used most often?
 - Was this method successful? Why or why not?
- Were some types of communication better suited for certain purposes?
- Was there more than one type of communication for the same purpose?
- What were the most common purposes of communication?
 - Were these purposes mostly positive, mostly negative, or a mixture of the two?
- Were there any missed opportunities for communication with parents?
- Were there any types of communication in the list that were never used?
 - Could these types be incorporated?
 - Would they be successful?
- What do you see as a successful type of communication?
- What do you see as an unsuccessful type of communication?

Now, choose one type of communication from the “Home-School Communications Observation Chart” that you would like to modify or try in the second week. If you wish, use the lines provided below the chart to make some notes on how you plan to implement this type of communication (e.g., date, time, audience, language style, people to enlist for help, purpose of communication, and how you will determine the success of this type of communication).

Use the second week to try the type of communication that you have chosen.

- Ask yourself or someone else if the type of communication was successful.
- Would you try it again?
- If so, is there anything you would change next time?

Activity 3: Personal Reflection

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Pen/pencil, “Personal Reflection” worksheet

Objective: To reflect on how you communicate with parents from low-voice communities.

Procedure: Use the questions on the “Personal Reflection” worksheet to reflect on how you communicate with parents from low-voice communities. If you wish, use the lines provided to write down any ideas that come to mind.

