

Administrator Guide: *Parenting Responsible Children*

This administrator guide has been prepared to assist you in conducting parent training based on the booklet, *Parenting Responsible Children*. This information coordinates with the *Managing Behavior to Support Differentiating Instruction (MB)* professional development manual. It is preferable (but not required) that you are a teacher, administrator, or paraprofessional who has read the MB manual and participated in implementing two choice discipline (TCD) principles in a classroom or school.

The purpose for conducting parent training is as follows:

1. To explain TCD benefits and procedures to parents whose children are being introduced to TCD at school;
2. To clarify expectations and proposed consequences related to school implementation;
3. To seek parental participation in reinforcing TCD procedures at home using similar language, target goals, and choice/consequence options to address problematic behaviors;
4. To suggest ways parents and children may benefit from using TCD procedures at home.

Generally speaking, parent trainings should not last more than 45-90 minutes. We suggest that you begin with an initial “overview” meeting (30-45 minutes) to get acquainted, discuss school implementation of TCD, and distribute *Parenting Responsible Children* booklets. After the initial overview, you may want to schedule another meeting for parents requesting additional information or training.

How to Use the Administrator Guide

The Administrator Guide is organized into two sections:

- General suggestions for conducting effective parent training
- Section by section key points

In the first section we provide general suggestions to help you organize and conduct effective parent meetings. Sample schedules are included at the end of these notes to help you determine how best

to allocate time and tailor your presentation to address specific needs of parents, guardians, teachers, and school representatives.

In the second section we provide brief summaries of key points to assist you as you present selected topics. Most parent meetings will not include sufficient time to cover all topics in the booklet. Therefore, these summaries can help you focus your presentation to align purpose with need and use time efficiently. This section also includes sample group exercises that may be used if time and purpose allow.

General Suggestions for Conducting Effective Parent Training

There are a number of reasons why you may decide to offer TCD parent training. Perhaps your program requires a home/school connection that encourages parental involvement or that satisfies requirements for a governmental supplement or grant. It may be that you simply recognize the benefits of consistency when parents and teachers work together to accomplish behavioral goals.

Whatever your situation, there will be some initial factors to be considered. For example, what timeframe will you have for your presentation and what are your primary goals? It is helpful to begin your preparation by identifying 1-3 target goals and creating a tentative schedule for the parent meeting (just as you do when preparing to implement TCD). In following sections we will guide you through the steps.

It is helpful to begin your preparation by creating a tentative schedule and identifying 1-3 target goals for the parent meeting.

However, before beginning your actual preparation, we encourage you to consider carefully a few general suggestions that may improve your presentation. These suggestions have come from our professional experiences and those whom we have mentored. When conducting parent training, remember the following:

1. Stay within the limits of your expertise and experience

Our first suggestion for conducting effective parent training is simply to stay within the limits of your expertise and experience. Respect the boundaries of your authority to avoid digressing from your purpose or making suggestions that lack reasonable, evidence-based support.

Hopefully, you will have been practicing TCD successfully for a period of time before extending your practice to parent training. Ideally, you should possess a thorough knowledge of the principles outlined in the MB manual, as well as considerable experience, so that you can answer parents' questions regarding how to address behavior conflicts using TCD. Be sure that you can comfortably apply two

choice language “on the spot” before conducting parent training so that you may provide sufficient examples.

If possible, we suggest that you work with other teachers (if you are implementing TCD as a team), administrators, and/or supporting paraprofessionals who have assisted with using TCD in your school or with your children. Work together to plan and conduct parent training that encourages and assists parents.

Remain aware that TCD and this training require planning, thoughtful reflection and decision-making, and consistency with follow through in practice. While the suggestions contained in the booklet and manual have proven successful for creating positive changes in communications in *many* schools and homes, some situations require more intensive intervention than may be adequately addressed in your training. In those cases, it is strongly advised that the parents seek additional expertise.

2. Be respectful

Our second suggestion is that you carefully demonstrate honor and respect for the parents who attend your meeting. Encourage parents to “stay the course” since raising children can be challenging and sometimes exhausting. Ensure that parents understand your desire to support and assist with their needs.

Your goals for an initial parent meeting are to develop cooperative relationships and communications between school and home that enable you to serve as a resource for help. The consistency that occurs when parents and teachers work together greatly benefits children and improves results. Therefore, use supportive, encouraging word choices and voice tones. Approach parents with sincerity and humility and you will find that they are much more willing to embrace your ideas for change.

On a similar note, we encourage you to honor and respect diversity and preferences. Use discretion in your conversations, comments, and especially, your examples. In other words, do not discuss private affairs about individual children at the parent meeting. If a parent asks a personal question about his/her child, respond by offering to discuss the matter during a break or schedule a private meeting.

3. Be prepared

Our third suggestion is: be prepared! Preparing in advance helps you communicate more clearly and direct the meeting efficiently. Drafting a tentative schedule and identifying the topics and objectives you want to cover helps you maintain focus and avoid exceeding time restrictions.

Parents will be more likely to respect what you have to say if you respect their time and effort to attend.

We encourage you to *practice* your presentation numerous times to ensure it “flows” and sounds natural. If possible, videotaping yourself and/or reviewing your presentation with a colleague will provide feedback to help enhance your communication (by knowing where to add more examples, change the order of topics, spend more or less time on a particular topic, etc).

Also, review materials carefully to ensure that you are very familiar with your subject. It is recommended that you reread the administrator guide and the *Parenting Responsible Children* booklet thoroughly prior to your meeting. This will prepare you to answer questions and to refer parents accurately to additional information listed in the parenting booklet. It will also help you review your examples to ensure that they clearly and accurately represent TCD language and intent.

4. *Avoid using specific names or examples*

As a matter of professionalism, you should never use an actual person, name, or story in any way that might be construed as critical or embarrassing. As you prepare, make a list of examples you would like to use to emphasize your points on a sheet of paper and review them carefully.

Change all names to protect identity. Study your examples to ensure that they clearly exemplify your points in ways that are clear and encouraging, not critical or sarcastic. Flippancy and sarcasm can often be offensive and should therefore be avoided. Using humorous examples is acceptable so long as they are not personally identifiable or distracting from your purpose.

5. *Remember your audience*

A fifth suggestion is that you remember your audience. Many of your parents are working individuals whose time is limited and who may feel fatigued at the end of the day. For that reason, you should seek to offer them the most efficient and clear presentation possible. Also, consider the education and familiarity of your audience regarding any new words or concepts you will be introducing.

Try to use real life examples and user-friendly definitions that concisely illustrate unfamiliar terms, procedures, or underlying principles. In short, make TCD understandable by speaking directly and simply. This is not the time to be impressive by using formal language or quoting extensive research. Be straightforward in offering parents *real* help. Let your language communicate, “You can do this!”

Finding that balance requires thoughtful planning, including taking time to anticipate parents' questions, points of disagreement, background, and needs. Remember that the purpose of parent training is to *help parents communicate positively with children*, either at home or by their support for school policies and practices. Your agenda should remain clearly and exclusively focused to promote success for families.

6. *Avoid talking about yourself*

Finally, our last suggestion is that you avoid talking unduly about yourself. It is common for nervous individuals to talk about themselves or spend too much time on personal examples of limited relevance.

Parent training is not a forum for you to share *your experiences as a teacher or a parent*, except as those experiences directly illustrate the needs of children and parents utilizing TCD. Therefore, avoid personal commentary that does not specifically relate or contribute to your preset objectives. Again, practicing your presentation and soliciting the feedback of a trusted colleague can help you identify and eliminate unnecessary diversions.

Getting Started

Materials

Depending on the details surrounding your parent meeting (time of day, length of time, inclusion of other activities), you need to prepare all materials in advance. These materials may include:

- *Parenting Responsible Children* booklets (minimum one per family)
- any additional handouts (such as a meeting agenda, class announcements, etc.)
- handout with teacher names and contact information, including times during the day that you are available to visit with parents or respond to email
- equipment (if applicable, projector, computer, screen, etc.)
- name tags and markers
- comfortable seating with easy access and visibility
- refreshments (optional)
- sign-in sheet or evaluation form (if required)