



# BRIDGING THE LINGUISTIC/ CULTURAL/SOCIOECONOMIC GAPS IN BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLANNING

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## **Preface**

A child learns most efficiently when teachers and parents work cooperatively toward a common product or goal. Working together with parents of diverse backgrounds involves interactions that reveal important information about their styles of communication, implied social rules and values. These unique cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic differences can impact a student's behavioral problems. With active involvement of parents, the BSP team can create, implement, and monitor effective plans. Thus, joint productivity in planning behavior support services is vital. Fellow educators working with diverse populations have found the following points helpful:

### **I. Pre Meeting**

- Determine what is best time and modality for communicating with the parent about the concerns of school personnel regarding the student's behaviors.
- If an interpreter is needed find one who is familiar with the educational issues and prepare them in advance on the meeting. Discuss if the interpreter will be speaking simultaneously or after a person has finished.
- Provide enough information during the initial contact to ensure that the parent understands the purpose of the meeting.
- Explain customs/mores for the type of meeting they will be attending, i.e., who will attend, setting, how to dress, duration, etc.
- Find out whether any extended family plan to attend; and be respectful of whatever the parent chooses.
- Determine if student should attend, ask the parents about their preference.
- Understand that some individuals, because of cultural expectations, may engage in unusual rituals such as bringing food or drink; decide ahead of time how to handle this possibility without offending the family.
- Ask whether they are concerned about cultural/linguistic differences and how they might impact the meeting.

### **II. Opening the Meeting**

- Make overt efforts to demonstrate respect: "What should I call you?" or "How would you like to address members of the team?"
- Review the agenda again, spelling out precisely what will be done and why, how long it will last, and parent options.
- When using an interpreter always remember to communicate directly with the parent not the interpreter.
- Include respectful pauses between communications.
- Empower parents by reminding them of how valuable their input is to the BSP.

### **III. Developing the BSP with Full Parental Participation—It’s the interaction!**

- Begin with quick or simple story-telling- Emphasis on the student’s endearing features.
- Show the parent(s) that you are aware of child’s strengths.
- Allow parent to share with you something that child is gifted at or involved in.
- Respect parental desire to speak vs. observe; frequently checking in during the meeting.
  - “Does this make sense to you as XXX’s parent since you know XX much better than we do?”
  - “Does this sound like a support that would work for XXX?”
  - What works at home for XXX when you have problems? Or “How do you get him to calm down at home? Maybe we can try that here.”
  - Ask whether the parent has observed the problem behaviors, and whether they agree they are indeed problems; invite them to share their perspective.
- Develop a method for communication on progress with BSP---Face to face considerations vs. phone/email/written.
  - Respect time off from work cost to parent and family.

### **IV. Follow-Up**

Always share information from staff about the student’s successes with the parent as it allows them to feel they are a part of the BSP team and part of the solution.

#### **References:**

*Multicultural Students With Special language Needs: Practical Strategies for Assessment and Intervention.* Celeste Roseberry-McKibbin (1995). Academic Commutation Associates. ISBN 1-57503-002-0

*Cultural Considerations in Discussing Mental Retardation.* Nancy Gronroos, M.S. (2002) NASP Web Site: [www.naspcenter.org/teacher/culture](http://www.naspcenter.org/teacher/culture)