



THE MENTA GROUP®

# Creating an Optimal Learning Environment to Support All Students

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October 11, 2019



# A Powerful Relationship

**Adult Behavior  
and  
the Environment**

have a huge impact on

**Student Behavior  
and  
Learning**

# Video Clip

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxyxywShewI>

# Video Discussion

## Think-Pair-Share

- Using the video as your reference, give an example of when/how an adult's behavior impacted a student
- Give an example of a time your behavior has positively or negatively affect a student's behavior and/or learning

# Optimal Learning Environment Ideas?

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What makes up an Optimal Learning  
Environment?

# Discussion Question

What kind of learning environment best supports social emotional development?

What are the characteristics of a learning environment that best supports social emotional development?

What would a learning environment look like that best supports social emotional development?

# Optimal Learning Environment® conditions

- Well-structured
- Instructional
- Safe = WISER®
- Engaging
- Responsive

*Optimal Learning Environment® conditions are the*  
**WISER**® choice

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# Well-Structured OLE

Well-Structured means that the:

- Students meet clearly taught expectations
- All classroom variables (i.e., procedures and schedules, adult responses) organized for student success
- The degree of consistency and predictability in the learning environment



Optimal Learning Environment® Conditions are  
the WISER® Choice.

# Instructional OLE

1. Every **location** and **activity** is an opportunity for instruction.
2. Every **interaction** is an opportunity for instruction.
3. Every **inappropriate behavior** and **ineffective choice** is an opportunity for instruction.

We are **always** teaching something and  
there is **always** something to teach:  
Academic and/or Social-Emotional Skills

*Optimal Learning Environment® Conditions are  
the W|SER® Choice.*

# **Instructional** OLE

**Patience**

**Taking Turns**

**Anger management**

**Using words (appropriately) not fists or  
yelling**

**Respect for person of authority: not  
just teacher**

**Respect for people**

**Respect for property**

# Instructional OLE

**SEL Activity:** Determine at least two situations (describe specific student behavior that lets you know that THIS is the needed skill.) in which each of these Social-Emotional skills could be taught.

**Do NOT yet discuss how you would teach them.**

*Optimal Learning Environment® Conditions are the WISER® Choice.*

**Safe** OLE

Creating an environment that is both

- Emotionally **Safe** and
- Physically **Safe**

*Optimal Learning Environment® Conditions are the WISER® Choice.*

# Engaging OLE

Engaging students

- In the classroom and school community (i.e., the **learning community**)
- In the **learning process**

# How do we engage students in the learning Community?

## Community:

- Sense of Belonging (OUR class!/Our School!)
- Successfully working together in groups
- Involving all students in class discussions and projects
- How do you engage your students in the learning community currently?



# Engaging in Learning Process

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HOOKING KIDS ON LEARNING  
TEACHING HOW TO LEARN

*Optimal Learning Environment® Conditions are the WISER® Choice.*

# Responsive OLE

Responsive to student needs (within parameters of the program)

- Differentiating academic and instructional support
- Differentiating behavioral and social emotional support

**One Size Does Not Fit All**



# Optimal Learning Environment<sup>®</sup> conditions

**Maximize student learning**  
and  
**Increase positive school behavior**

# Activity: Reflection & Plan

What are you currently doing to create an Optimal Learning Environment in your classroom and/or school?

What are some additional things that you might do to enhance your learning environment?

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# Self-Management

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# Managing how we respond to our own emotions

We must not allow our emotions to drive our decisions, our words, or our actions.

# Self Management (Self Regulation)

Self Management refers to 3 key aspects:

- A) Managing how we respond to our own emotions.
- B) Relating to students in ways that support growth and learning.
- C) Remaining vigilant and aware throughout the learning environment.

# Relating to students in ways that support growth and learning

- As educators it is our responsibility to conduct ourselves as **supportive** professionals throughout the day, during every interaction we have with students.
  - **Doing this relies on our having the necessary understanding and skills to be able to make non-emotion driven decisions**
- As educators we utilize teachable moments to provide an instructional learning environment.  
(INSTRUCTIONAL)

# Vigilant and aware throughout the Learning Environment!

As educators we must be vigilant and aware of :

1. Our students
2. Our Own Behavior(s)
3. The Lessons

# Vigilant and aware of the STUDENTS

We need to be vigilant and aware of:

- what individual students are doing and not doing
- what individual students are saying and not saying
- what student interactions are occurring

(SUPERVISION)



# Vigilant and aware of the **LESSONS!**

We need to be vigilant and aware of the lessons

- what expectations are being taught
- what expectations aren't being taught
- what are the students learning
- how do these expectations connect to the bigger picture; school or district expectations, family or community expectations

# Expectations

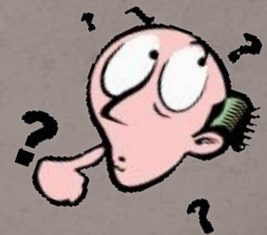
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# EXPECTATIONS Define Success

- Must be clear in our own minds
- Teach Expectations to those involved (district officials, site administrative teams, teachers and staff, all stake-holders)
- Assess—Do they really understand the Expectation?
- Assess—If they do understand, do they have the skills and abilities needed in order to meet the Expectation?
- If not, then teach them what they need to know in order for them to be successful!

# EXPECTATIONS: DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

- We have Expectations all the time AND others have Expectations of us all the time!
- We have big and sub-expectations
- We focus on different Expectations at different times
- Expectations must be measurable in some way so we can determine if they have been met.



# EXPECTATIONS

- Academic and Behavioral Expectations
  - **Academic**—What we want the students to know or be able to do at the end of the lesson/unit that they didn't know and/or couldn't do at the start.
  - **Behavioral**—Specific behaviors that the students are to exhibit (walking in halls, raising hands in class, etc.)

# Expectations

- It is important that we state our expectations in terms of what we want the student to do rather than what we don't want them to do!

# Intentional Language

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# INTENTIONAL LANGUAGE

- Intentional means that we are thoughtful of what we say and how we say it
- Thoughtful about the words we use and choose not to use when we communicate
- We attend to what and how we communicate, both verbally and nonverbally

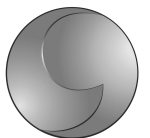


# INTENTIONAL LANGUAGE

- Being **constantly** aware of the messages that we are sending through our:
  - Posture
  - Words
  - Facial expressions
  - Voice tone and volume
  - Gestures

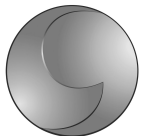
# INTENTIONAL LANGUAGE

- Be professional
- Give clear directions
- Use consistent words
- Be nonjudgmental
- Use your voice as a tool
- Practice overt communication



# Questions we don't really mean and statements that don't make sense

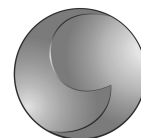
- Can you stop that?
- Why are you acting this way?
- Why aren't you paying attention?
- Let's try to calm down
- You might not want to do that again.



# Application

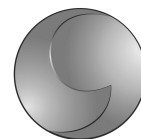
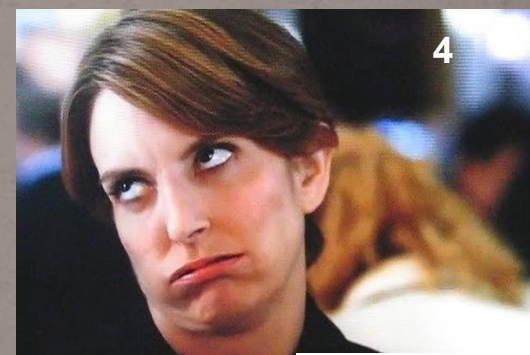
What do these statements communicate to a student?  
How might you change them to elicit a positive response?

1. "I've told you ten times to stop that..."
2. "You better stop all that yelling, or else..."
3. "Relax."
4. "Do what I told you."



# Application

What do these nonverbals communicate to a student?  
How might the student respond?

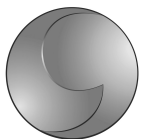


# Feedback

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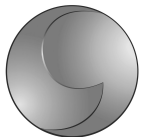
# Feedback

- Feedback tells students how they are doing in terms of meeting or not meeting our expectations.
- Problem behavior is modified through reinforcement of appropriate alternate behaviors
- Confirming feedback lets students know they are meeting expectations
- Corrective feedback lets students know that something needs to change
- At least a 4:1 ratio of confirming to corrective feedback



# Feedback

- All behavior is **purposeful**
- Identify the function of the inappropriate behavior
- **TEACH** a replacement behavior that achieves the same goal for the student
- Use a higher ratio of confirming to corrective feedback when teaching a new behavior





# Adult Responses

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# Adult Responses

Adult Responses refers to how staff

- Communicate with students and with each other
- Behave and respond to students and their behavior
- Set up and follow through on procedures and schedules

# Adult Responses: Consistent & Predictable

- Important to be Consistent & Predictable in our responses to student behavior
  - Consistent adult responses let the students know they can depend on you to provide both the structure and support they need to be successful
  - Adult consistency keeps things safe, physically and emotionally, for our students.
  - Being predictable and consistent teaches the students that you will address their inappropriate behaviors and that they can rely on you to address their inappropriate behavior in a way that is consistent with your school wide expectations.

**Thank You!**