

# Expectations from Self and Others

## Section 5



Many of us give the very best of who we are every day, yet all too often struggle to feel like our best is good enough. Understanding and at times challenging our own expectations and perception of others' expectations is key to identifying and transforming unrealistic expectations that compromise our ability to approach others with compassion and extend that compassion to ourselves. In this section, we identify the expectations we have for ourselves and for others and question whether these expectations are helpful for us or holding us back.



[Distribute this document to all participants to explore prior to the following application activities.](#)



### **Key Activity**

#### [Clarifying Expectations \(20-45 minutes\)](#)

The purpose of this activity is to examine whether our individual expectations are aligned with collective understanding.

### **Wellness Practice**

#### [Developing Positive Affirmations](#)

### **Circle Agenda**

#### [Staff Circle Agenda, Section Five](#)

### **Core Content Visual**

#### [Expectations Discussion Prompts – Use this Visual and Display in Staff Break Areas](#)

Posting this visual in common staff areas will serve as a reminder of content covered to staff and perhaps serve as a future conversation started for deeper reflection among staff members.

### **Supplementary Activities/Handouts**

#### [Setting Helpful Expectations \(20-30 minutes\)](#)

Many times, our expectations do not align with our own wants, needs, and values, but rather, represent things that are socially expected of us or things we are conditioned to believe. This exercise helps us set intentional expectations that are rooted in our values.

#### [Handout with Tips for Clarifying an Expectation Concern](#)

Assists staff in clarifying the what, why, and how of an expectation across different levels of positional power.



For links specifically for leadership and additional resources, please visit the Toolkit online.

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INTRODUCTION

Many of us give the very best of who we are every day, yet all too often struggle to feel like our best is good enough. Understanding, and at times challenging our own expectations and perception of others' expectations is key to identifying and transforming unrealistic expectations that compromise our ability to approach others with compassion and extend that compassion to ourselves. In this section, we identify the expectations we have for ourselves and for others and question whether these expectations are helpful for us or holding us back.



INFORMATION

We all carry a load of expectations with us. Expectations are firmly tied to our needs, desires, values, and beliefs. They paint a mental picture of how we think things "should" be and are often informed by our social identities (race, sex, sexual orientation, etc.) and life experiences.

As educators, we are taught to have high expectations for our students and to hope that those expectations will drive them to do better than they otherwise would have done. Our expectations of ourselves or the expectations placed upon us can also drive us to excel. Self-expectations and the expectations placed upon us can be realistic or unrealistic, helpful or hurtful. When our expectations are made explicit and realistic, they can be the foundation for dreams, ideas, and possibilities. They can feed us, inspire us and help us to show up in our lives. If we are holding ourselves or someone else to an unrealistic standard, then we can learn to adjust these expectations.

Expectations become problematic when they take us out of the present to solely focus on the future, or fill our heads with how things "should" be and feel and of how the people around us "should" act and feel. Our "shoulds" of ourselves reflect expectations that we feel we are not meeting. When we tell ourselves that we "should" be doing something, we are reinforcing the idea that we are not doing it. If our internal dialogue says *"I should spend more time on these lesson plans"* the implicit end to that sentence is *"... but, I am not."* We are reinforcing the negative and this can result in guilt, frustration, or anxiety.

Well meaning, but unchecked, expectations can form the bedrock of compassion fatigue. Expectations may operate in the short-term: *"If I get this lesson just right, all the kids will love it."* In this example, we create expectations for ourselves (*"If I get this lesson just right..."*), as well as for others (*"all the kids will love it"*). These expectations may invite shame if not living up to our self-expectation, as well as resentment if others do not live up to our expectations of them. Expectations also operate in the long-term and may be evident in the goals we set for ourselves or the metrics that others set for us: *"I will be a great teacher if X% of my students pass achievement tests."* As this example shows, our own expectations may be influenced by the expectations others have for us.

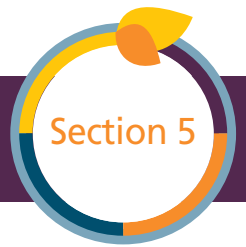
While we can rarely change what other people think or expect of us, by noticing our expectations, we can keep those that fit and are comfortable, while making changes to those that do not serve us. It is only when conscious of our expectations that we can examine how realistic they are. We can increase our compassion resilience by making a conscious effort to notice the "shoulds" in our life and the effect that such expectations may have on us. We must first notice and name our expectations if we are to better align them with reality. Let's take a moment to think about some expectations we carry as educators. Try to think of a few expectations in each category.

Developed in partnership with:



[compassionresiliencetoolkit.org](http://compassionresiliencetoolkit.org)

# Expectations from Self and Others



	Expectations of self	Expectations of clients	Expectations of colleagues	Expectations of clients' families
<b>Example</b>	<i>I should like all of my students</i>	<i>Students should always come prepared to class</i>	<i>They should spend X hours on course preparation</i>	<i>Parents should monitor their child's homework</i>
<b>My Examples</b>				

Place a star next to those you think are helpful/realistic and an X next to those you think are hurtful/unrealistic.

Let's look at a few examples of how unchecked expectations may lessen our compassion resilience. For each case, we will consider strategies that may be helpful in building our compassion resilience.

## CASE 1:

Lisa has taught for seven years and is beginning a new school year. So far, she has loved her job, derived a lot of satisfaction from her work, and felt like a "successful" teacher. She expects this year she should feel the same way. However, she's charged with developing a new curriculum, finds her class size has increased, has fewer engaged students in her classes, and is experiencing stress in her personal life.

**Reflection:** Lisa is experiencing multiple systemic drivers of compassion fatigue and external sources of stress, which are then affecting the likelihood she can perform as she has in prior years. Her compassion resilience may suffer if she does not adjust her expectations to these new circumstances.

**Strategy:** Lisa may find it useful to consider what is influencing her ability to meet her expectation. In the table above, what system drivers make it difficult to achieve the examples you provided?



## CASE 2:

Todd is undergoing his first teacher-parent conference. He's discouraged to find that many parents are not exhibiting the engagement he anticipated: some do not show up, others appear not take the conversation as seriously as he had hoped. He starts to blame parents for the student's learning and behavioral difficulties and feels angry that they are not getting the support they need.

**Reflection:** Our expectations are often internal and undiscussed. Todd may have found it useful to discuss his expectations regarding conferences with other teachers and explored how his expectations, informed by his social identities and life experience, may be different than the families he is working with.

**Strategy:** Making expectations transparent helps us to see if they are aligned with reality. How might you test the expectations you listed in the table by talking with others? How do your social identities and life experiences shape the expectations you listed in the table?

**Reflection:** It is a losing battle to expect outcomes that are not within one's control.

**Strategy:** Todd may also find it useful to identify expectations that are outside of his control. Which expectations that you listed in the table relate to outcomes you cannot control?



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### CASE 3:

Mary prides herself on being a principal who teachers trust, one who offers a safe space for teachers to discuss their challenges and collaborate to solve problems. This year, there have been more teachers than usual seeking out her support, especially with many new teachers and the recent loss of one of the students. Mary is struggling with her own feelings surrounding the student's death and struggling to provide the same support to teachers as in the past. Mary believes that her feelings should not interfere with her ability to provide mentoring support for the teachers.

**Reflection:** Just as unrealized expectations or unrealistic expectations may challenge our compassion resilience, so too can symptoms of compassion fatigue make it more difficult to meet our expectations! Remember: compassion fatigue is a common response to the difficult situations we may encounter.

**Strategy:** The relationship between compassion fatigue and expectations makes it all the more apparent how self-compassion heightens our compassion resilience. Mary's perceived inadequacy could lessen her compassion resilience even further. With self-compassion, Mary is better equipped to recognize her own needs to maintain her physical, emotional, and mental well-being so that she may again show up compassionately for staff. By applying some strategies found in this toolkit, Mary might build her resilience.

While it pays to keep an eye on our own expectations and assumptions, we also have expectations that are heaped upon us. Many of us struggle mightily as we try to fulfill the expectations of others. Expectations placed upon us are often not clearly defined and unexpressed; rather, we make inferences about the expectations people have for us.

Uncommunicated expectations cannot be met. Expectations from others may be reasonable or unreasonable. When unreasonable expectations are placed upon us, it may be a quick path to feeling burnt-out. Giving too much of ourselves as we strive to meet or exceed expectations may also lead to burn-out. If we are over-zealous in our pursuit of exceeding expectations, then people eventually presume that we will continue to go over and above at each and every opportunity. When we no longer can go the extra mile, or no longer wish to, then everyone is disappointed. It is not difficult to see how expectations can be a root cause of damaged relationships and compassion fatigue!

We may set more reasonable expectations of ourselves – and build more satisfying relationships with others – when we talk to people to clarify their expectations. Only with open lines of communication can we be clear about what the expectations are and whether we can reasonably meet them. Sometimes, bosses or colleagues who are setting unreasonable expectations may not even be aware they are putting unfair pressure on us. [This resource provides us with ideas](#) as to how we might approach a conversation with bosses whose expectations may be too lofty.

Building positive working relationships rests on the following:

- acknowledging we all have expectations;
- striving to make expectations more transparent;
- and taking responsibility to communicate our own wants and needs (i.e., our own expectations).

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SELF-CARE



STRATEGIES

### Self-Care Strategies for the MIND: Developing Positive Affirmations (10-15 minutes)

[This exercise is designed to help identify hurtful self-expectation and transform them into positive affirmations.](#)



WHAT'S NEXT

Compassionate boundary setting – personal and professional.

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### Clarifying Expectations



There is often a lack of clarity regarding workplace expectations. As a result, people working in the same school may have different understandings of the expectations related to their jobs. This exercise aims to clarify expectations. To begin, think about a work-related expectation about which you are genuinely curious. Perhaps you wonder if you understand the expectation accurately. Perhaps you wonder how others fulfill the expectation. Do not use this as an opportunity to shame people who are not living up to your expectation of them. Use this as an opportunity to learn from your co-workers and supervisors, if they are in the room. Once you have identified an expectation, frame it as a question. For instance, perhaps you wonder how much time to spend with each parent during parent-teacher conferences. As a question, you would ask *“How much time do you spend (or expect me to spend) with each parent during parent-teacher conferences?”* Use a process that allows everyone in the group to ask one question. As each person asks a question, the rest of the group answers on a piece of paper or 3x5 notecard that is then folded up and collected. One by one, address each question by unveiling the answers provided by the rest of the group. Discuss those questions that yield surprising answers or a diversity of opinions. For example:

*Perhaps a relatively new teacher asks the question about how long to spend with each parent during parent teacher conferences. Responses may be as follows:*



**Teacher 1:** *“I schedule conferences for 20 minutes, so each person gets their 20 minutes. This keeps me on schedule.”*

**Teacher 2:** *“I spend a range of time (x minutes – y minutes), depending on the parents and the issues we have to discuss. Each situation is unique.”*

**Administrator:** *“When I taught I thought I’d spend at least 20 minutes, but with experience, I rarely went over 10 because I learned how to focus conversations on the most important details.”*

Other suggestions of expectations staff may value discussing include what constitutes an office referral, frequency and format for communication with families, email response time, and time spent on lesson planning.

Inviting discussion can open the door to learning something from one’s colleagues and perhaps to increasing understanding and empathy for how people manage the many responsibilities and expectations of their jobs. Having administrators/ supervisors in the room encourages clarification too.

As the facilitator, it may be wise to set a few group guidelines:

1. Urge honesty among participants;
2. Make it apparent that no one need engage in the discussion – their answers may remain anonymous;
3. Let the group know that there are no silly questions – people at different stages of their careers naturally may have different questions.



This activity can be done at the start of multiple meetings by reading just one question and the corresponding answers at each meeting.

## Self-Care for the MIND: Developing Positive Affirmations

Affirmations are carefully crafted thoughts and emotions that are internalized into your self-concept. The first two steps identify our affirmations; the next steps help plant these affirmations in our mind.

**Step 1:** Identify some of your unrealistic hurtful self-expectations related to parents, students, colleagues, and/or the profession. These are akin to negative forms of self-talk and when exposed, often indicate it is impossible to meet the standards we set for ourselves. These often contain words such as always, never, must, should, no one. List some of your primary hurtful self-expectations in column one of the blank table. (See examples in the completed table on the next page.)



**Step 2:** Take each hurtful self-expectation and change it into an alternative belief that feels right to you. These affirmations should be stated in the positive, be succinct yet specific, stated as if it already exists, and be only about you. (See the completed table for examples.)

 Step 1: Examples of Unrealistic Hurtful Self-expectations	Step 2: Examples of Positive Self-affirmations 



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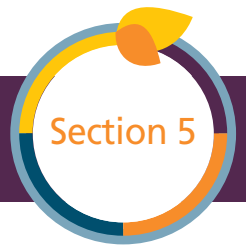
 <b>Examples of Unrealistic Hurtful Self-expectations</b>	<b>Examples of Positive Self-affirmations</b> 
<p>No matter how well I teach, it will never be good enough.</p>	<p>I am good enough today as the person I am. While I will strive to do better in my work and life, I try to accept who I am today.</p>
<p>Nobody cares how hard I work, how much I care about my students.</p>	<p>I am a caring, empathetic, person who is deserving of self-compassion.</p>
<p>I have to be successful with all my students all the time. I must be an outstanding teacher, better than other teachers I know.</p>	<p>I am doing the best I know how to do, given the person I am today and the situation I am dealing with. When I know a better way and can do it, I will.</p>
<p>I can't feel good about myself unless I am completely successful in alleviating students' problems.</p>	<p>I accept myself as I am – knowing, that as I do, I feel more secure and confident within myself and with others.</p>

**Step 3:** Follow one of these recommendations to help your affirmations take root as part of your self-concept:

- Select one affirmation a week for the next month. Or, select one affirmation that is really important to you and that you would like to focus on. Write it down and place it somewhere you will see it multiple times throughout the day.
- Tell someone your affirmation. We are more likely to meet our goals and act on our intentions when we share them with others.
- If you are a practitioner of meditation, choose one affirmation and focus on it with increasing clarity and intention while practicing a breathing or meditation technique. Continue repeating the affirmation to yourself while visualizing what it will be like and feel like when the affirmation has become real.



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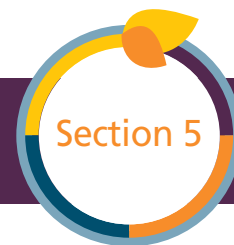
Staff Support



Circle Agenda

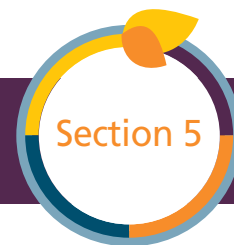
Circle Topic	CR Session 5: Expectations from Self and Others
<p><b>Planning</b></p>	<p>Send the <a href="#">introduction document</a> from Section 5 in the online toolkit at least 4 days prior to the circle to all participants.</p> <p>Hold a meeting with leadership to prepare for this section and invite leader(s) to consider the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Look back at the list of the drivers of fatigue and resilience the team brainstormed in Section 4. Notice how many relate to a sense of unclear, unreasonable, conflicting, or assumed expectations.</li> <li>2. Expectations include a why, what, and how. Effective leaders engage people in conversations to ensure clarity on all three of these components of an expectation. They also encourage employees to ask questions if such clarity does not exist.</li> <li>3. If you participate in the group, as unclear expectations are discussed, resist the pull to give explanations during the meeting. Thank the participants for describing unclear expectations and offer to work to remove such barriers with your leadership team. If you are not participating in the group, the facilitators may share the unclear or unrealistic expectations that the group uncovered with you.</li> <li>4. As you explore expectation communication, keep in mind the clarifying the why tips in <a href="#">this handout</a>.</li> </ol> <p>For the full leadership preparation document, please visit <a href="#">this page</a>.</p>
<p><b>Purpose of Circle/ Learning Objectives</b></p>	<p>We are learning to identify the expectations we have for ourselves and for others and whether these expectations are helpful or holding us back.</p>

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Circle Topic	CR Session 5: Expectations from Self and Others
<b>Materials/ Preparation/Time</b>	<p><b>Time:</b> 45-50 min</p> <p><b>Materials:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Circle kit</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Values and shared agreements created in first session</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 3x5 cards</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pens</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If doing the bonus activity, make copies of <a href="#">Setting Helpful Expectations</a> handout</li> </ul> <p><b>Set-up:</b> Up to 15 chairs arranged in a circle without furniture in the middle.</p> <p><b>To consider:</b> <a href="#">Understanding Your Social Location as a Facilitator – Active Bystander Intervention: Training and Facilitation Guide</a>.</p>
<b>Welcome/Check-In (5 minutes)</b>	<p><i>“Our expectations of ourselves and the expectations placed upon us can be realistic or unrealistic, helpful or hurtful. They can feed us and inspire us and help us to show up in our lives. If we are holding ourselves or someone else to an unrealistic standard, then we can learn to adjust these expectations.”</i> – CR Toolkit</p> <p>(Go-around) Name a small thing you did today that is an example of living up to an expectation you or someone else has for you. (Each person tries to say something quick and different than what has been said already.)</p>
<b>Grounding/Wellness Practice (5 minutes)</b>	<p><b>Share:</b> Please place both feet on the floor, hands comfortably in your lap and take three slow deep breaths. Think of a place that brings you peace and calm. What do you see when you are thinking about this place? What do you hear as you think of this place? What do you smell? Take another moment to really visualize yourself in this place. When you are ready, open your eyes or bring your gaze back to the circle.</p> <p>If you would like to consider a different grounding practice, please review the <a href="#">mindfulness appendix</a> for additional suggestions.</p>
<b>Review (5 minutes)</b>	<p>Last circle we completed a system drivers exercise looking at drivers of our fatigue and resilience. Today we are going to look at the impact of the expectations we have of ourselves, those we have of others, and the expectations others have of us. If unclear or unrealistic expectations at work arise, we will decide as a group if we want the facilitation team to anonymously share these with leadership for future clarification.</p>

# Expectations from Self and Others



Circle Topic	CR Session 5: Expectations from Self and Others
<p><b>Guiding Questions</b> (20 minutes)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. (Go-around) Share an example of an expectation that someone had for you that was “aspirational” – just far enough in front of what you were currently doing to allow you to stretch and find new strengths within yourself.</li> <li>2. (Partner discussion) Share an expectation you have for yourself in your organization or personally that you think might be unrealistic. What is the impact of that on you and your relationships?</li> <li>3. (Go-around) Share an example of an unstated expectation that you think someone else has for you.</li> <li>4. Ask the group to answer one or both of the following two questions anonymously on a notecard. These thoughts will be shared with leadership. Explain that clear expectations state the why, the what, and the how.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What expectations need to be clarified to offer consistent and effective care to our patients? One that needs to be clarified.</li> <li>– What is one expectation that might be getting in the way of the best patient safety and care? One that is a barrier.</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. <a href="#">Share Tips for Clarifying an Expectation Concern.</a></li> <li>6. (Go-around) As you think about your comments you wrote on your notecard, the unrealistic expectation you stated in the last Go-around, and our conversation last week about your level of control in your work environment, what is one step you could take towards better clarifying the expectations that are troubling to you? What might you need to know or communicate about the why, what, and/or how of the expectation?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Putting it into Practice</b> (5 minutes)</p>	<p>(Go-around) What is one expectation that you hold for someone else that you would like to clarify by discussing with them? Share the topic not the person with whom you want to speak. After going around make the connection to boundary setting – our next session!</p>
<p><b>Closing (10 minutes)</b></p>	<p><b>Turning Unrealistic Expectations into Affirmations</b></p> <p><b>Share:</b> As our closing, we are going to do a practice from the information document from this section that helps us turn an unrealistic expectation into an affirmation. For example:</p> <p><b>An unrealistic expectation:</b> I should keep working at a task until it’s at 100%.</p> <p><b>Affirmation:</b> Don’t let perfect be the enemy of good.</p> <p>(Write on 3x5 card) What is an affirmation you can tell yourself that would counter an unrealistic expectation you have for yourself in your role at your organization?</p> <p>Facilitator will collect and read out anonymously.</p> <p>If you so choose, facilitators can compile affirmations into one document and distribute to participants in Section 6.</p> <p><b>Bonus Activity:</b> Handout <a href="#">Setting Helpful Expectations</a> for personal reflection between sessions.</p>

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## Section 5

Clear and reachable expectations help us take steps towards success.

What expectations can you help clarify or adjust for others? What expectations do you need clarified or adjusted for you?



# Expectations from Self and Others





## Section 5

### Setting Helpful Expectations

Unhelpful expectations may create negative feelings when our goals seem constantly out of reach or they leave us feeling like we are not “good enough.” Expectations rooted in the future (e.g., “I should get a promotion next year”) can keep us from being present. In this exercise, practice setting expectations that are helpful, by identifying expectations that do the following:

- Stem from how we want to live, act, and show up in the world
- Are focused on the present
- Are within our control
- Can serve as a guide to daily living

Expectations such as these can help us align our purpose and values with actions. Take time to write down realistic expectations you have for yourself in each sector of the wellness compass. Refer back to Section 2 of the toolkit if you need a refresher on the sectors. Examples are provided, but try to think of at least one helpful, realistic expectation for each area of the compass:

	<b>HEART</b> <b>Relationships:</b> ex: I will connect with my colleagues. <b>Emotions:</b> ex: I will ask for help when I need it.
	<b>SPIRIT</b> <b>Core Values:</b> ex: I will use my values to guide my decisions. <b>Rest &amp; Play:</b> ex: I will seek work-life balance.
	<b>STRENGTH</b> <b>Stress Resilience:</b> ex: I will respond, rather than react, to stress. <b>Care for My Body:</b> ex: I will recognize signs of physical fatigue.
	<b>MIND</b> <b>School/Work:</b> I will be present while at work. <b>Organization:</b> ex: I will say “no” at times so that I do not overcommit myself.

If you completed this exercise as a group, take turns sharing your examples with one another. You might also use flip chart paper, one for each area of the compass, and have everyone write down their examples in each area. As a group, discuss what you found difficult and rewarding about the exercise. Was there one sector that was most difficult for you?





## Communicating with Parents/Caregivers to Support Effective Expectations

Further resources are included in Section 12 of the toolkit – **Compassionate Connections with Caregivers**

When educators are sharing data with caregivers about their child, whether it is achievement data or behavior data, how we talk about the data and the context we set for the conversation can determine if it is helpful or hurtful to the child and their ongoing engagement in school. We can fan the flames of unrealistic expectations caregivers (and we) might hold for the child or support caregivers (us) in developing helpful aspirational and realistic expectations with their child.

### Such data is shared in many ways:

- Reports on assessment outcomes (MAP, Forward Exam, student engagement surveys, student report cards, etc.)
- Through child-specific communication to a caregiver by phone, digitally, or face-to-face (caregiver-teacher conferences, daily check-ins, etc.)
- Through class-specific communication to caregivers as a group or individually (verbal, comparative generalizations about a class, school-home communication tools, etc.)

### Introductory discussion:

1. How have you experienced the sharing of data with a caregiver having a positive impact on a child's behavior or academic success? (Your sharing or your observation of another teacher's sharing.)
2. How have you experienced the sharing of data with a caregiver having a negative impact on a child's behavior or academic success?
3. What elements of your (or others) approach do you believe led to the negative and positive outcomes of the data sharing?

## Communicating with Parents/Caregivers to Support Effective Expectations (continued)

### Tips for data sharing with parents:

#### 1. Clarify data by putting it in a broader context that includes:

- The recognition that any data you are sharing is only one point of information at one point in time and is only truly valuable if considered in the context the many points of information you hope to gather to better understand a child's behavior and academics.
- The parent brings the broadest perspective on their child and without the parent sharing that with the educator, it is impossible for the educator to have a clear picture of the child they seek to teach and with whom they seek to build a relationship.
- Information about a child's engagement in the classroom, with peers and adults.
- Approaches the educator has tried to build a relationship and support the child's success – how the educator builds students' resilience in the classroom.

The broader context must drive our discussions with parents about realistic and aspirational expectations. The information we have gained from the parent is set alongside what we have observed in order to discuss any adjustment to expectations and how we will break the larger expectations into smaller steps towards them. These conversations are often best with the child included!

#### 2. Create a safe space and then invite parents into that space for authentic conversations. It is not good enough to say that we believe the parent's input is crucial to our work with their child, we must create safety by:

- **Offering multiple ways to connect with us** – email, text, phone, in-person, in our classroom, in a location in the school that the parent suggests, at times that work for the parent, etc.
- **Remembering to not talk too much** after our initial welcome to the conversation. Start with asking if they have anything to share with us. When we share our observations, do so in a concise way that does not overwhelm and offers strengths and areas for improvement. Ask an open-ended exploratory question. Then listen! Create a vacuum and notice (out loud) that sometimes it takes a while to gather our thoughts in response to things we have heard.
- **Limiting education jargon and acronyms.**
- **Admitting to our vulnerabilities!** We are seeking help so we can be a better educator.
- **Receiving feedback with gratitude and curiosity.** Excerpts from a WI school superintendent's advice to district staff: "In an article posted in the Harvard Business Review the author, Tasha Eurich, notes that some critical feedback 'can make us defensive, angry, and self-conscious, which subsequently impairs our effectiveness.' From my perspective, the best thing to do after having received critical feedback is to give yourself and if appropriate, your team, time to reflect. ... He goes on to share Eurich's summary of five empirically supported actions that can be used to help you use critical feedback without letting emotions get in the way of using the feedback to improve desired outcomes.
  - a. *Don't rush to react.* Though you might feel pressure to push past emotions and respond to critical feedback right away, the best reaction generally comes when we take the time to step back and see the bigger picture to help put the feedback into perspective.
  - b. *Get more data.* We shouldn't act on feedback until we truly understand it. Taking time to gain more details and information related to the feedback helps ensure our response is thoughtful and purposeful.
  - c. *Find a harbinger.* In responding the opportunities that are developed based on feedback, choose one highly visible and symbolic action that will show how serious you are about your next steps toward transformation.
  - d. *Don't be a lonely martyr.* After receiving critical feedback people often tend to avoid the person or people that provided the feedback. If anything, we should pull people who tell us the truth even closer. Our biggest critic can become our greatest champions when we enhance relationships through ongoing discussions related to their feedback.



## Communicating with Parents/Caregivers to Support Effective Expectations (continued)

The superintendent closed with these words: “Remember that change is just one option. Sometimes the best response to critical feedback is to admit our flaws both to ourselves and to others. When we let go of the things that cannot change, it frees up the energy to focus on changing the things that we can.

Your ability to reflect on critical feedback to help achieve improved outcomes will prove beneficial to both you, your team, and the students in your buildings. Embrace these moments as opportunities to move forward and grow. Thank you for your leadership.”

3. **Collaborate with the parent** to plan what each of you will try to discover about the student by adjusting your behavior. Decide how you will work together to minimize the stress on the child and maximize the child’s sense of competence. Clarify what you expect of yourself and invite the parent to join you. “I will talk with your son about his love of baseball cards and see if we can find a way to transfer that to our social studies unit. Would you be willing to set a timer and require him to spend no more than 20 minutes a day on the homework during the next two weeks? Then let’s talk to see if my connecting what he’s passionate about to his school work and you spending less time feeling frustrated with him not doing his school work has any positive impact.”
4. **An effective process** for a teacher, parent and student meeting when some change is needed can be found here.
5. **Select best time for the data sharing.** Avoid the “autopsy” timing. Get at challenges early on. Parent-teacher conferences that come too close to the end of a grading period can be demoralizing. If you have no control on the timing of your meeting, consider focusing on the next semester or year, “What have we learned that we can carry forward/ communicate with the next teacher to support your child?”
6. **When the data is primarily positive, don’t overlook the opportunities.** For some parent-teacher conferences we are telling parents that their child is doing very well in school, both socially and academically. Use this time to build a positive and collaborative relationship with the parent. Be curious about to what the parent attributes their child’s success. Ask about any specific strategies they have used as a parent that might translate into the classroom and any practices of educators in the past that stand out to them as helpful to their child’s success.
7. **Take a moment to do a self-check** before you move forward in any attempt to share data as a way to support student success. The goals of the self-check are to:
  - a. Challenge any bias you bring to this conversation. What implicit or explicit bias do you have towards your student? What do you need to do to challenge those biases? How are your expectations shaped by your identities and personal experiences?
  - b. Identify any underlying discomfort with the prospect of meeting with parents or a specific parent or around the data you want to share.
  - c. Decide if you feel competent enough in your communication skill and the strategy you will use that those two strengths can to override the discomfort. Seek some collegial support if you do not.
  - d. Create space for you to move from discomfort to curiosity. This will allow you to approach the parent with humility, openness to learning, and confidence in what you bring to the collaborative conversation.

## Communicating with Parents/Caregivers to Support Effective Expectations (continued)

### Scenarios to discuss how you might apply the tips:

1. The state test scores have arrived in your district and you will write the cover letter to go home with the scores. Outline the key points you want to make in the letter. What does your school currently do well when it comes to sharing test score data with parents? What concerns do you have about how your school currently handles the sharing of test score data? What adjustments would you like to suggest?
2. It is parent-teacher conference time! You have a student who works very hard every day to the point where you are concerned that the student is experiencing an inordinate amount of stress. The student has dropped out of a band club and often goes to the library to do homework during lunch. He is at the top of the class ranking as a sophomore. Outline what you want to share with the parent. Outline what you hope to learn from the parent. How will you create a safe space for this conversation? What fears do you have about this conversation? What strategies will you employ to minimize the possibility of your fears coming true?



# Expectations from Self and Others

## Section 5



Tips for a Dialogue about Expectation Concerns:

## Clarifying the Why, What and How

If you find you have an expectation that needs clarifying or are working with a coworker who is not fulfilling an expectation, utilize these tips to engage in a conversation for deeper understanding.

For those with:

### More positional power communicating with those with less positional power:

- **Ask about others' ideas** (positive and negative) before you give yours. Repeatedly invite concerns, questions, and ideas.
- **Explain the rationale** for the expectation relative to how it fits with the vision. Be clear whether flexibility is possible or not.
- **Disclose your own fallibility, mistakes, and need for advice.** Ask permission to offer advice on how to meet expectation.
- **Over-communicate your intentions** for the type of relationship you want to build (your True North/vision).
- **Summarize and repeat** back what is decided.

### Less positional power communicating with those with more positional power:

- **Avoid triangulation,** always give feedback directly. If needed, get advice and help from others to prepare for a direct conversation.
- **Ask questions to seek the rationale** for the expectation and to clarify what success in meeting the expectation will look like.
- **Assert personal views** and need for support to meet the expectation with "I statements".
- **Ask permission** to give positive and negative reactions.
- **Connect your ideas** about modifying expectations to how they help with their goals and challenges.