


## Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP)

# TIPSHEET #5: Communication

An Inclusion Resource Sponsored by:  CVS CAREMARK Charitable Trust

*Regular, positive communication develops trust among students, staff, and families. Trust allows you to work through challenging moments together to build an inclusive environment.*

### HOW?

Effective communication is consistent, clear, honest, and includes non-verbal cues (smiling, nodding) and visual supports. In particular, communicating about your program's predictable routines and clear expectations is important for all students to feel safe and therefore more able to participate positively.

For more information, check out our [Visual Supports Toolkit](#) and our [Power of Positive Messages Tip Sheet](#).

### PREVENTING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR AND PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR:

Communicating clear expectations *before* problems develop is critical but when you see a student heading toward a challenging behavior, intervene early.

Cooperation is more effective than coercion in the long run, however. For example, provide students with an opportunity to come up with their own solution by giving information with accurate, simple and non-judgmental statements: "Paste dries up when the lid isn't put back on." "When we feel upset, we take deep breaths." If the child solves the problem, acknowledge it with labeled praise (see flip side).

#### << Quick Tips >> For positive communication

- **Greet** your students individually at the beginning of every day
- **Acknowledge** small changes and little "wins"
- **Call or write home** with good news, not just bad
- **Say "hello", "buen provecho", or "zài jiàn"** to students, co-workers and families, even when you're busy

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### ADDRESSING “MISSBEHAVIOR”

When you do need to redirect challenging behavior, avoid blame and shame messages (“you always talk out of turn...,” “why can’t you ...?,” “how many times do I have to tell you?”) and lecturing or berating. Instead, replace them with more effective, brief and simple “I” or “we” messages (e.g., “We all need to care for our tools – put the lid on the paste before going out to recess,” or “I need quiet in this room right now”). Give the student a timeframe, walk away and come back (“I’m going to check on another student, and I’ll be back in 30 seconds to see how you’re doing”).

### USING PRAISE EFFECTIVELY

When you “catch students being good” with labeled praise they learn positive ways to get adult attention. This is especially important early in your day, and immediately after redirecting a student. *Be genuine.* These tips are only useful if you mean what you say. That may mean you have to think really, really, really hard to find a success or positive moment in a student’s behavior – but there is always something, especially if you catch them early and look for little wins.

How to give labeled praise:	Example
1. Get close to the student	Teacher walks up to Jimmy in line
2. Use child’s name	“Jimmy,
3. Use praising words	Good choice!
4. Label their behavior	Thanks for lining up quietly when the bell rang”
5. Give additional cues	Use a pleasant tone of voice, gives Jimmy a high five and huge smile

### REMEMBER!

Everyone is here for the children: ASP staff, school-day teachers, administrators, and families. When conversations get difficult, be patient and intentional. “Say what you mean, and mean what you say.” ([Responsive Classroom](#))

Find additional Tip Sheets and more information about the Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP) at:

[www.SNIPSF.org](http://www.SNIPSF.org)  
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