

Key Takeaways

- **Give yourself the gift of sharing a shared team vision** - if this seems like a lot right at first, start small with one time of day.
- **Focus on the 5 W's** - the who, the where, the when, the what, and the how
- **Plan for when, not if, conflict arises**
- **Celebrate your team's successes** - the small and the big wins. Be in gratitude to one another.

Episode Notes

What would the perfect day look like in your classroom? When was the last time you spent time thinking about that? When was the last time you talked with your teaching team about creating a shared classroom vision? Those are big questions, and you may be wondering how to answer them. Today's guest may be able to help.

In this episode, Kate Cline and our amazing guest Deidre Harris dive into working as a teaching team, what to do when conflict happens, and creating team agreements.

Deidre explained that no matter what role she was in, or where she worked, conflict within teams happens. Deidre saw an opportunity to teach others the importance of working as a team, and how to do it. **"Relationships are the key, it's foundational. If you have a really strong reaching team, you are going to have really strong student child outcomes."**

What makes a teaching team strong? Being on the same page. Having the same understanding and vision of where we are going, what we want for children and families, how we will get there, and how each member of the team will work to achieve the outcome.

How do teaching teams create a vision for the classroom?

- **Come prepared to write this all down.** It is important for a reference, but also psychologically, it makes you consider it a neutral document or neutral tool. It is much easier for us to look at a tool and address the questions, concerns, or issues with a tool than with one another.
- A good place to start is to look at the vision statement for your organization and try to think of what that statement means on a day-to-day basis. **"If I were to walk into your classroom, what would I see you doing, what would I hear you saying, or what would that interaction look like that would represent this vision in action?"** In other words, what is our why, and how do we honor it every day?
- Another thing to ask yourself is What would a perfect day look like? Right from morning dropoff all the way through pickup. That's your personal vision.
- Then, ask your team, What would a perfect day look like for us? Come to an agreement with your team as you think about what this means during different times of the day. Drop off in the morning, whole group time or circle time, mealtime, outdoor time, at pickup in the afternoon, etc.

- There is no right or wrong way to do this. You and your teaching partners can do these exercises separately and then come together, or work together from the start. Keep it simple. Have the conversation and then backtrack. Think, **what would it take for us to create that vision?** What can I do, and what can you do? Don't focus on your role specifically, but think of how you want to interact as adults to create this vision. This is a dance, and when you dance well as adults, the children will dance well together too.
- Consider posting your vision in your classroom, your who, what, where, when, and how.

The overlap from CLASS To building a strong teaching team

- Emotional Support
 - Positive climate - What does that look like in terms of interacting with your team?
 - Teacher Sensitivity - How are we supporting each other?
 - Regard for (Student) Perspective - Does everyone on the team have a voice? Are we creating buy-in?
 - Negative Climate - be mindful - what are the things we are saying/doing that might detract, make things tense, or are disrespectful?
- Classroom Organization - what are the systems we are setting up? Is everyone on the same page in terms of our expectations of the children, behavior management, and our interactions? Think about productivity. What systems are we putting into place around attendance, meals, and transitions?
 - Instructional Learning Formats- if we are not on the same page in terms of what the children will learn and how we will engage them, things won't go well. There might be conflict, confusion, or polarity.
- "We know children learn through modeling. Another word for this is, **how are we being with each other?** Because when we're being respectful, when we're being intentional, when we're being these ways, children automatically see and start doing."

What to do when conflict arises

- This is not a matter of "if" - it is a matter of "when". Conflict happens, and it's something you can plan for and be intentional about.
- One thing you can do is make team agreements. This can be around something happening that I am not comfortable with, don't like, etc. **Make an agreement of how you will communicate, share that you don't like this, and when you will share this.** We call this front-loading so that there is an understanding of how we will handle disagreement before it happens.
- If we have a plan to fall back on so that even if we are upset or feel emotionally charged, we aren't flying off of the handle. You can step back, remind yourself of what you agreed to do, and then follow up.
- **The key to these agreements is to write them down.** If something happens once or twice, that is an anomaly - likely you wouldn't make an agreement for this, life just happens. If it becomes a pattern, then you would work together to come to an agreement and document it. The next time this arises, you get to go back to refer to the agreement together. Maybe you notice that the agreement isn't working for some reason, and that's okay, things might have changed. **You can always tweak your agreements, they are living documents.**

What if you fail as a teaching team or as a teaching partner? What if it's a big mistake?

- An important part of the agreement process is **"no blame, no shame, no guilt, no fault"**. This works for your teammates, and for yourself. Don't beat yourself up or self-shame. Instead, acknowledge. Here is the agreement, what is the reason behind this agreement? If it is non-negotiable, then I can figure out what it is that I get to do to make sure it happens, and or, I ask for support.
- Maybe I don't know how to do something, maybe I need to ask for clarification around the meaning of the agreement. We can go back and clarify it within the agreement. It helps everyone stay responsible and accountable.

What if you've been working with someone for a long time and you've never been on the same page. How do you approach them with this idea?

- What stopped you in the past from having this conversation?
- Try approaching the conversation casually. "Hey, I was just wondering, what would a perfect day look like for you? What do you think about this?"

What about if you have more than two people, or even a room where there is morning, afternoon, and shared caregivers? How can we get more than two people on the same page without making people feel excluded?

- Everyone writes down and then shares their five W's (the who, the where, the when, the what, and the how) for different times throughout the day. We then have a conversation about how to work together so that the classroom flow is seamless and everyone is on the same page.
- "It takes all the guesswork out of everything. It's not just for your members of the inner core of the team, but the itinerants, the speech pathologist, or the occupational therapist that's coming in. They also get to be included in the team agreement as well. It'll just be specific to the time of day or the frequency of which they're providing services. Everyone who touches the children in that classroom gets to be on the team agreement."

How do we support each other when things are going well?

- Celebrate your wins along the way and give acknowledgment.
- We say it all the time, positive specific acknowledgments for children. We've got to do the same for us as adults. It doesn't matter if the win is small. Yes, Johnny got on the potty today. What did we do? We're celebrating Johnny, but what did we do as a team that supported Johnny in doing that? Yes, Kate, you got him there. You made sure that he was getting to the potty before he had to, way to go.
- Celebrate the wins - the small and the big
- break it down - what did we do to make these results or these outcomes happen?
- When we celebrate, we've got gas in our tank. That way, when the not-so-good days happen, we have things to draw back on. We have the relationship to keep us strong, and we know more good days are to come.
- Practice gratitude. For example, on Friday, look at what you did that week and all that you accomplished and overcame. Be in gratitude for each other, daily or weekly, but do it regularly.
- **Try implementing a teaching team gratitude journal!**