Listening and Nonverbal Communication

The cooperating teacher will demonstrate deliberate communication techniques to enhance positive student teacher/intern interactions.

Key Method

The cooperating teacher uses a number of strategies that help establish clear and consistent guidelines for communication throughout the process with their student teacher/intern.

Method Components

The Importance of Communication

Communication is the foundation for building the relationship between the cooperating and student teachers. Heightening awareness of listening skills and nonverbal communication is critical to building and maintaining a strong, positive relationship between the cooperating/mentor teacher and student teacher/intern. These are ideas most have encountered previously in one setting or another, but they are often neglected with respect to the time and effort spent preparing to be a cooperating/mentor teacher. These "soft skills" are relatively easy to practice when a person is aware and intentional in their interactions with others.

A cooperating/mentor teacher can use listening strategies such as mirroring to confirm the message the student teacher/intern is trying to deliver. This helps eliminate misunderstandings and reinforce the fact that the cooperating/mentor teacher is there to help the student teacher/intern grow professionally. In contrast, not verifying a message or dismissing an idea can undermine the relationship and cause distrust. Similarly, nonverbal signals sent to the student teacher/intern or the students in the classroom can have a significant impact. For example, if the cooperating/mentor teacher is "checked out" in the back of the classroom, the student teacher/intern may perceive a lack of interest in helping him/her improve.

Key points

Listening Skills:

"The word 'listen' contains the same letters as the word 'silent.'" ~ Alfred Brendel

- Listening to each other without "jumping in" or thinking about a response instead of what the other person is saying is a skill that requires practice. It is very easy to drift into thoughts of points to make in a response instead of focusing on really listening to the speaker. This is something that is important to model and describe explicitly. This is a communication skill that translates to many other situations, such as communicating with parents/families.

- 5th habit from Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* – "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Genuinely seeking to understand another person clarifies messages, conveys empathy, and builds trust.

- It is sometimes useful to have cues to remember to focus on what another person is saying, such as returning eye

contact once it is noticed that the mind is wandering or thinking of responses.

Communication Techniques and Strategies:

- *Mirroring* is a technique used to reflect back what has been said to verify that what was understood by the listener is what was intended by the speaker. The listener uses phrases such as "what I heard you say is..." followed by "is that correct?" The listener continues by asking, "Is there more?" The conversation continues until the speaker is done sharing.

- *Empathizing* is a technique used to validate the speaker's feelings even when the listener disagrees or has a different perspective. The listener may say something like "After listening to what you said, it sounds like you are feeling ___ (frustrated, angry, sad, disappointed, excited, encouraged, etc.)." The speaker can verify the feeling statement or correct any misunderstanding.

- Another strategy is to avoid relating the speaker's situation to an experience the listener has had. Connecting the speaker's "story" to the listener's experience can cause the speaker to feel as if he/she has no unique concerns. Empathy is useful, but appearing that the listener always understands how the speaker feels can be disrespectful.

- Principles of general psychology apply

- In order to grow professionally, the student teacher/intern must have the lower level needs met – physiological, safety, and social. (Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*)

- A level of trust between cooperating/mentor teacher and student teacher/intern needs to be established before learning takes place. This is somewhat parallel to student learning in the classroom, but with a focus on establishing mutual respect between adults.

Body Language and Nonverbal Cues

Perspective of the Student Teacher/Intern

- Facial expressions convey a great deal that may or may not be intended. Think about what is conveyed by a smile, an eye-roll, or a frown. A student teacher/intern may be looking for visual cues consciously or unconsciously from the cooperating/mentor teacher, so care should be taken, as much as possible, in choice of expressions. This may be most important when a learning experience isn't going as intended.

- Body language and nonword audibles (i.e., sighing) have a similar impact as facial expressions. It is important for the cooperating/mentor teacher to be aware and make conscious choices in all forms of nonverbal communication.

- Choices made regarding leaving the room, attending to other matters (i.e., reading emails/texts/papers), or other disengagements from the classroom can convey a message. The cooperating/mentor teacher needs to consider the message conveyed by such actions.

Perspective of the Students (Kids in the Classroom) and Its Influence on the Classroom

The same nonverbal communications listed previously are also perceived by the students in the classroom. The cooperating/mentor teacher needs to consider the message conveyed to the students about the student teacher/intern and the learning experience underway. For example, students noticing the cooperating/mentor teacher checking email during a learning experience may perceive that the experience is not very valuable, or students noticing that the cooperating/mentor teacher is frowning or sighing during a learning experience may think that the student teacher/intern is doing a poor job. This is particularly true near the beginning of the student teaching/internship period.

Paying attention to following will greatly increase your success as a cooperating teacher.

- Eye contact
- Facial expression
- Proximity and space
- Silence
- Smiling/frowning

The cooperating teacher must also be able to provide optimal feedback by paying attention to:

- Word choice
- Tone of voice

Supporting Research

- Thompson, N. (2015). People skills. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Stone, D., Heen, S., & Patton, B. (2010). Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most. Penguin. Retrieved from:
  http://bit.ly/2tm8BUi

- Knapp, M. L., Hall, J. A., & Horgan, T. G. (2014). Nonverbal communication in human interaction. Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning. Retrieved from:
  http://bit.ly/2snXtlj

- Fletcher, S. (2004). Mentoring in schools: a handbook of good practice. London: UK, New York, NY. Retrieved from:
  http://bit.ly/2qcb1Dy

Resources

- Communicating with Your Mentee
  https://sharepoint.washington.edu/phys/grad/Forms/phd_MentorCommunicationCWD.pdf
- The Top 15 Most Effective Communication Techniques and Strategies
  http://bettermindbodysoul.com/effective-communication-techniques/
- Body Language—Understanding Non-verbal Communication
  https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/Body_Language.htm
- 10 Steps to Effective Listening
  http://bit.ly/2tZxN0k

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To demonstrate competence, complete all three parts. 1.Overview Questions 2.Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence 3.Reflection Each section provides a description and success criteria. To earn the micro-credential, each artifact must receive a "Proficient" or "Pass" evaluation.

Part 1. Overview Questions

450 word min - 500 word max

Please provide responses to the following questions
● How do you currently use, notice, or react to nonverbal cues from the people in your life? Give two to three examples.
● Describe a situation where you have used either mirroring or empathizing and tell why it was effective.
● What was the outcome of your use of mirroring and/or empathizing?
● Describe a situation that you could have handled better by paying attention to nonverbal cues or by using mirroring or empathizing.
● Using your response to the situation described, explain why mirroring and/or empathizing would have helped you handle the situation more effectively

- **Passing:** The response clearly answers all three of the questions and includes relevant examples from personal experience.

Part 2. Work Examples / Artifacts

To earn this micro-credential, complete the following two parts **and submit as one document.**

(Please do not include your name on the document.)

Part 1 Scenario

Read the following scenario and then rewrite it so that mark uses mirroring and/or empathizing in a way that helps Jerome feel better and be more successful during parent–teacher conferences. The intern, Jerome, has some concerns about the upcoming parent–teacher conferences. He wants to talk about his concerns with his mentor

teacher, Mark.

Jerome: I'm a little worried about the parent–teacher conversations. The parents I've met at school events so far keep commenting on how young I look, and it makes me feel like they doubt my competence as a beginning teacher.

Mark: Oh, don't worry about that. Have a little confidence in yourself!

Jerome: It's going to be difficult to talk with a few parents whose students are struggling, and I'm worried they'll think that I'm way off base about what I need to discuss with them.

Mark: There's no reason to worry. Back when I was a student teacher, my cooperating teacher just disappeared into the teacher's lounge most of the time I was at school, including the parent conferences. You should feel lucky I'll be there with you, so just stop worrying.

Jerome: Okay. Thanks.

Part 2 Observation:

Spend 15-30 minutes observing interactions between two or more people. This could be in your classroom, in a staff meeting, or at a coffee shop. Use the following format to take notes during your observation. List at least five nonverbal cues along with an analysis of the potential message conveyed and what strategy could be used to make the relationship stronger.

Example Strategies:

- Mirroring
- Empathizing
- Avoid relating to the speaker's situation
- Eye contact
- Facial expression
- Proximity and space
- Silence
- Smiling/frowning
- Word choice
- Tone of voice

Action or Expression

Example: A child in the back of the room is lying down while a story is being read aloud.

Potential Message Conveyed

The child may be tired or is not engaged in the story

Suggested Strategy

The teacher could make eye contact and then raise her eyebrows to show that she notices that the student is checked out and the expectation is that he/she will sit up and listen to the story. Then follow up later with a private conversation using a caring tone and helpful words to find out how to help the student stay more engaged in the story.

	Proficient	Basic	Developing

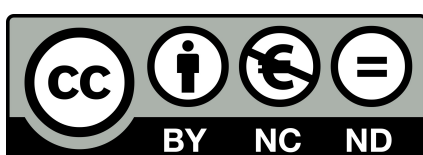| Scenario	Explicitly uses specific strategies in a way demonstrating that Mark is being successful with his student teacher.	Re-writes the scenario in a way that demonstrates some improved success, but specific strategies are not explicitly used.	Rewrites the scenario, but there is no evidence of improved success.
Observation	Observation has at least 5 observations with a potential message and relationship improving strategy listed for each. Strategies are relevant to the context.	One or more of the following is true: -Not all actions related to nonverbal communication -May not have completed all parts -Strategies are not specific or relevant to the context	Observations not related to nonverbal communication.

Part 3. Reflection

450 word min - 500 word max

Provide a reflection on what you learned about verbal and nonverbal communication. Address the following guiding questions:
● What impact will verbal and nonverbal communication have on you as a cooperating teacher?
● How could verbal and nonverbal communication strategies affect the relationship between the cooperating and student teacher?
● Describe the communication strategies you feel will be most effective in your communicating with your student teacher?
● How will you use what you learned to be more effective in communicating with your student teacher?

- **Passing:** The response clearly illustrates how communication strategies were used to build a relationship with another person. All four questions are addressed and included in the response.