

hiddensparks
without walls

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS



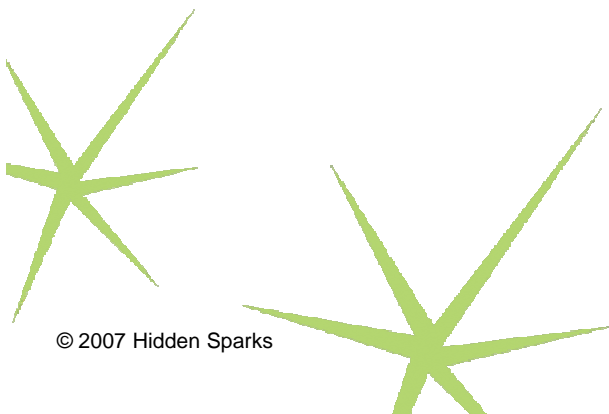
with Molly Warner
October 29, 2008



hiddensparks®
helping children reach their potential™

Conference Call Etiquette

- Remember to mute your phone by pressing *1.
- Press *1 again, when you would like to speak, this will un-mute your phone.
- Do not use your phone HOLD or mute button. If you do, your music will be broadcast to all of us on the call.



Our Guest: Molly Warner

Molly Warner, M.Ed is the learning specialist for grades 6-8 at the School at Columbia. Previously, she served as a Hidden Sparks coach in two Jewish day schools. Ms. Warner has also worked for All Kinds of Minds as a facilitator and family advisor at the Student Success Center in New York City. Prior to focusing on special needs, Ms. Warner taught at the Dalton School, the Lower East Side School, and Friends Seminary in Manhattan. We thank Molly for joining us today.

*1 to mute *1 to un-mute



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Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Today's Goals
- Rubrics for Communication
- Parent Teacher Conference Plan
- Reflections
- Future Hidden Sparks Without Walls Sessions

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Today's Goals

- Learn about effective strategies to communicate with parents about their child's progress.
- Assess your own communication style in order to be more reflective in your use of language in reporting student's progress.

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Setting the Context

What does good communication with
parents entail?

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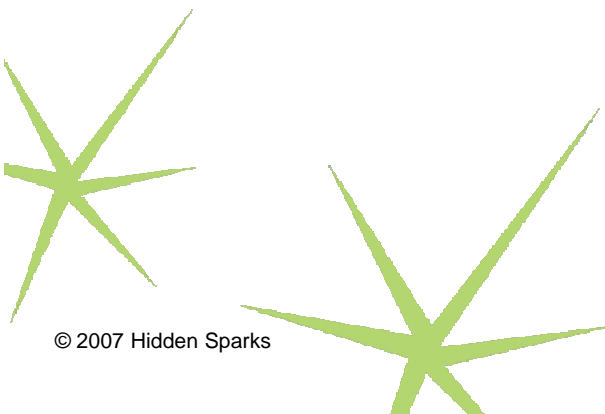


Hidden Sparks Rubric

	Very experienced (4)	Experienced (3)	Emergent (2)	Uneven (1)
Use of Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · positive, hopeful, optimistic tone used throughout · consistently shows compassion toward students and an understanding of students' learning strengths and weaknesses · rich, carefully chosen descriptive language used throughout · uses no judgmental language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · positive, hopeful, optimistic tone used most of the time · shows compassion toward students and some understanding of students' learning · descriptive language used most of the time · uses little judgmental language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · sometimes uses a positive tone · may convey a sense of compassion toward students but little understanding of student's learning · may use some descriptive language · uses some judgmental language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · uses a mostly negative tone · "blames" students for learning problems · little, if any, descriptive language · uses mostly judgmental language
Description of Student Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · elaborates and emphasizes student strengths and affinities · consistently describes observable behaviors as evidence for learning strengths and weaknesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · mentions strength and affinities but does not elaborate · describes observable behaviors but not consistently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · cites a strength or affinity but immediately qualifies · mixes generic labeling statements with a few descriptions of observable behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · makes positive comments but cites no specific strengths or affinities · uses generic labeling statements with no descriptions of observable behaviors
Plan for Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · conveys strong sense of alliance among teacher, student, and parent(s) · offers innovative, well considered strategies to address learning challenges · conveys strong sense of student's potential and optimism about the future · offers plans for collaboration among specialists and teachers · provides a comprehensive learning plan that addresses all aspects of student's learning profile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · conveys some sense of alliance among teacher, student, and parent(s) · offers moderately elaborated strategies to address learning challenges · conveys some sense of student's potential and optimism about the future · discusses collaboration among specialists and teachers · provides a learning plan that addresses some aspects of student's learning profile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · mostly places responsibility for learning on student · offers some but mostly unelaborated strategies to address learning challenges · conveys some sense of student's potential but mostly focuses on past and present difficulties · indicates interest in working with specialists or other teachers · provides a generic learning plan not geared toward student's learning profile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · places full responsibility for learning on student · offers few, if any, specific strategies to address learning challenges · conveys little sense of potential · does not mention working with specialists or other teachers · does not provide a learning plan

Use of Language

- Use of Tone
- Use of Descriptive Language
- Use of Non-judgmental Language



Use of Tone

Level	Description
4	Uses a positive, hopeful, optimistic tone throughout
3	Uses a positive, hopeful, optimistic tone most of the time
2	Sometimes uses a positive tone
1	Uses mostly a negative tone

Michael was a valued member of our class community. His sense of responsibility and kindheartedness are particularly outstanding. Throughout the day, his helping hand and encouraging words could be felt by all.

Use of Language to Characterize Learning Problems

Level	Description
4	Consistently reflects compassion toward student's learning problems and understanding of student's kind of mind
3	Reflects compassion toward student's learning problems and some understanding of student's kind of mind
2	Reflects compassion toward student's learning problems, but little understanding of student's kind of mind
1	Blames student for learning problems; reflects no understanding of student's kind of mind

Michael's energy waned whenever he had to sit and listen for extended periods. At such times, a teacher would either remind him to sit up or offer to give him some time out in order to refocus.

Use of Descriptive Language

Level	Description
4	Uses child-specific, carefully chosen descriptive language throughout
3	Uses descriptive language most of the time
2	Uses some descriptive language
1	Uses little if any descriptive language; feels depersonalized

Michael says he feels overwhelmed by large group work and prefers working independently or in pairs. In fact, he is really at his best when working with the right partner. We noticed how much Michael's enjoyment and skill in literature increased when he began studying with Tim, and his work with Sam on our class's booklet of math questions was truly impressive.

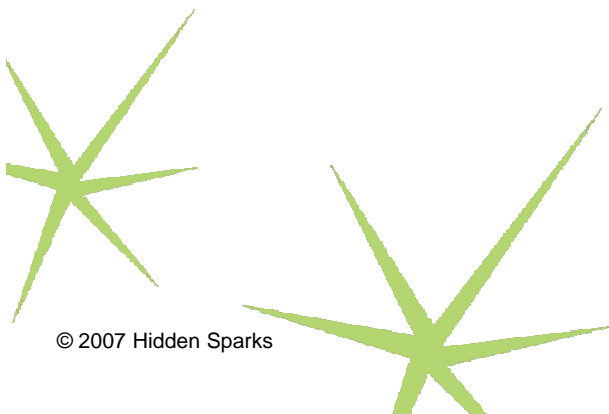
Use of Non-judgmental Language

Level	Description
4	Uses no judgmental language
3	Uses little judgmental language
2	Uses some judgmental language
1	Uses mostly judgmental language

Michael is self-critical. He quickly disregards his successes and hesitates to acknowledge his strengths. When discussing schoolwork with him, he tends to focus on what was difficult or less successful in the work he's done.

Description of Student Performance

- Focus on Strengths and Affinities
- Focus on Specific Observable Behaviors



Focus on Strengths and Affinities

Level	Description
4	Elaborates and emphasizes student's strengths and affinities
3	Mentions but does not elaborate on student's strengths and affinities
2	Cites a strength or affinity but follows immediately with a qualification that undercuts its value
1	Makes generic positive comments, such as on personality, but fails to cite any specific strengths or affinities

One of Michael's greatest strengths as a student is his willingness to listen to and incorporate the ideas of others. He is well aware of the areas in which he needs support and is open to teacher interventions. Michael knows how to help himself.

Focus on Specific Observable Behaviors

Level	Description
4	Consistently describes observable behaviors as evidence for learning strengths and weaknesses
3	Describes observable behaviors as evidence for learning strengths and weaknesses, but not consistently
2	Mixes generic labeling statements with a few descriptions of observable behaviors
1	Uses generic labeling statements and no descriptions of observable behaviors

For example, during a recent conversation in which he and his math teacher went over his work, Michael immediately focused on the sole multiplication quiz with a low score. When his teacher asked why he was ignoring all the other quizzes, on which he'd scored well, Michael just shrugged and smiled.

Plan for Growth

- Promote Alliance Formation
- Recommended Strategies for Improvement
- Infuse Optimism
- Advocate for Collaboration Among Educators (when applicable)
- Propose Learning Plan (when applicable)



Promote Alliance Formation

Level	Description
4	Conveys strong sense of an alliance among student, teacher, and parent(s)
3	Conveys some sense of an alliance among student, teacher, and parent(s)
2	Mostly places responsibility for learning on student; little mention of role of teacher and/or parent
1	Places full responsibility for learning on student; no mention of role of teacher and/or parent

Although it is difficult for him to sustain aural attention, we found that writing instructions and/or the main points of a discussion on the board helped Michael to focus.

Recommend Strategies for Improvement

Level	Description
4	Offers innovative, elaborated strategies, including both interventions & accommodations, to address learning challenges
3	Offers moderately elaborated strategies to address learning challenges
2	Offers some but mostly unelaborated strategies to address learning challenges
1	Offers few, if any, strategies to address learning challenges

The specially lined paper that Michael uses made writing easier for him and improved the appearance of his work. When possible, he typed his assignments on the computer. In addition, Michael benefits from using a highlighter to emphasize key words and sentences when reading instructions and other academic materials. The detailed checklist that Michael created on the computer to keep track of all that needed to be done was a great help to them.

Infuse Optimism

Level	Description
4	Conveys strong sense of student's potential and optimism about the future
3	Conveys some sense of student's potential and optimism about the future
2	Conveys some sense of student's potential but mostly focuses on past and present difficulties
1	Conveys little sense of student's potential

Two areas in which we saw progress are neatness and expansion in writing and sustaining attention and focus during frontal lessons and class discussions.

His sense of responsibility for himself and others is outstanding. We wish him an enjoyable summer and continued success in fourth grade!

Advocate for Collaboration Among Educators (if applicable)

Level	Description
4	Offers concrete plans for collaboration among specialists and teachers
3	Discusses collaboration among specialists and teachers
2	Indicates an interest in working with specialists or other teachers
1	Does not mention working with specialists or other teachers

Michael really works in partnership with his teachers to make accommodations for, and overcome, any difficulties he may have.

Propose Learning Plan (if applicable)

Level	Description
4	Provides a comprehensive learning plan that addresses all aspects of student's learning profile
3	Provides a learning plan that addresses some aspects of student's learning profile
2	Provides a generic learning plan, not geared toward student's learning profile
1	Does not provide a learning plan

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Parent Teacher Conference Plan

Keep In Mind The 'What' (the Message) And The 'How' (Tone, Examples, Metaphors, Etc...)

- Discuss student strengths (be specific)
- Discuss student weaknesses (provide no more than three; be specific)
- Incorporate a child's interests
- Discuss a plan for growth
- Sum up



Next Steps

What idea(s) or action steps will you bring back to your school as a result of today's dialogue?



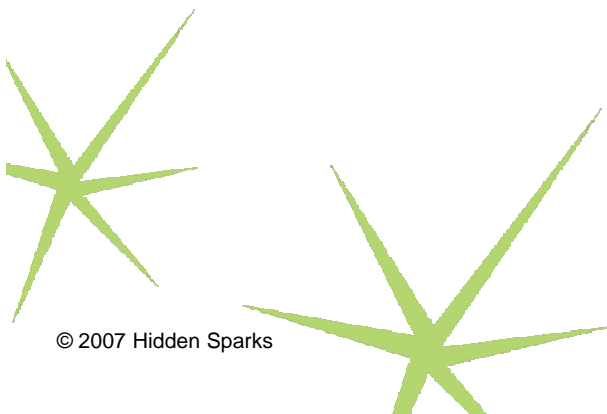
Upcoming Hidden Sparks Without Walls Sessions

De-escalating Intense Behavior – Nov. 6, Nov. 13
with Dr. Rona Novick

The Role of Memory in School Success- Nov 18., Nov. 25
with Claire Wurtzel

Language, Learning and Literacy – Dec. 3, Dec. 10
with Claire Wurtzel

Course on Attention – Dec. 9, Dec. 16
with Naomi Weiss

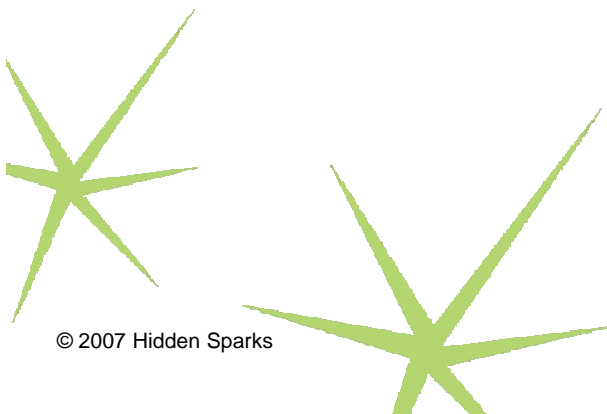


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