

## FACILITATING PARENT CONVERSATIONS

Back in January 2013 I attended an all day workshop with Lu-Anne McFarlane an Associate Professor at the University of Alberta. Her workshop was presented to the Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Speech Pathologist involved in the Early Hearing Program (BCEHP) in Vancouver. This workshop was sponsored by BC Family Hearing Resource Society.



We learned about different strategies and techniques to facilitate better communication with parents within our sessions. We reviewed effective goal setting and collaborative sessions. Collaboration (working in partnership) was a key element, as was autonomy (recognizing and valuing parent's choices – they are in control) and evocation (drawing out their views on change).

The new strategies discussed included REFLECTIVE LISTENING, OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS, AFFIRMATIONS, and SUMMARIES.

Reflective listening was the most important strategy. It helps others to organize their thoughts and reality. It is a skill and an attitude and is more than just careful listening as it requires a reflective response afterwards. There were seven different ways of reflecting of what a parent has said. Open-ended questions allow the parents to talk, think and explain. Key questions can help establish motivation to change, reasons to change, ability to change and plan for change. Affirmations are used to highlight the parents' strengths. Summaries consolidate what was talked about and allow the parents to leave with a sense of positive progress and potential.

Many other techniques were explored and practiced during the 7 hour intense workshop. At the end we were asked to reflect on what we had heard. I am going to remember to ask fewer questions and to be more reflective in my listening. I also am going to try to not hurry the talk, slow my pace and give 'space'.

By Patty Juno