



RESOURCES

TITLE | COMMUNICATION: FEEDBACK, NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION & GRANT WRITING

CATEGORY | Garden Educator Training

SUB-CATEGORY | Leadership for Community Engagement

OVERVIEW | This training aims to increase effective communication among garden educators and school community members through exploring best practices for delivering and receiving feedback, examining nonviolent communication as a tool for building relationships, and navigating tricky or triggering situations.

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Training Rationale:

Effective communication is important for any job. Education Outside provided various communication-related trainings to our garden educators that strengthened their ability to create and maintain support for their garden classrooms; effectively communicating with their school communities, partners, and funders was critical to our educators' and the garden's success. The three trainings discussed here represent Education Outside's fundamental building blocks of effective communication for garden educators: feedback, nonviolent communication, and grant writing.

Suggested Time of Year:

This training is most effective 2-3 months into the school year.

Suggested Workshop Length:

4 hours

Training Objective:

In order to develop stronger communication skills, educators will:

- become more comfortable with giving feedback and better equipped to provide feedback.
- learn about Nonviolent Communication - an effective tool for difficult communication.
- learn about basic grant writing in order to increase resources for their school sites.



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Training Overviews and Activity Ideas:

Giving and Receiving Feedback

As an organization, Education Outside worked hard to build a culture of feedback. From soliciting feedback from garden educators about Friday trainings to garden educators receiving monthly in-person feedback on their lessons from program managers and teachers - feedback was central to our program model.

- Feedback Training: It's useful to train garden educators on how to give and receive feedback. Please note that we adapted the following best practices from Coro Northern California and CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, two organizations in the Bay Area that support the development of nonprofit leaders. Some highlights are outlined here.

- Giving Feedback

- It acknowledges the strengths others bring to the table; it is specific rather than general.
- It is descriptive rather than evaluative.
- It describes the impact of observed behaviors.
- It acknowledges the subjective perspective of the person giving the feedback.
- It is directed towards behavior which the receiver can do something about.
- It is well timed: In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior.
- It is checked to ensure clear communication: Have the receiver rephrase the feedback received to see if it corresponds to what the sender had in mind. Ask questions so the receiver can process the feedback.

- Receiving Feedback

- Keep an attitude of receptiveness.
- Discriminate: Truly hear the feedback, then judge its value to you.
- Listen and don't defend: It's easy to feel that you have to respond or defend yourself. You don't: just listen. If you don't understand, ask for clarification.
- Know your limits: If you find yourself becoming overloaded or responding with emotions that you may not be able to control, it's okay to pause the discussion and revisit it at another time, possibly through a different format.
- Remember: Do what you can to increase your memory of what has been said to you. Take notes or write down action items, whatever system works for you.

- Activity:

- Have garden educators discuss appreciative and constructive feedback by having them think of a person to whom they need to provide feedback, breaking them into pairs, and have them discuss the following prompts:
 - What is this feedback about? What is the goal of this feedback; why should it matter to the receiver?
 - What did you actually observe? When did this actually happen?
 - What was/is the impact due to this action or behavior?
 - Personal statement of gratitude or appreciation. OR What is your request?
- After reflecting on the above prompts, have educators write down how they will approach the person they have in mind and have them practice with each other.

Non-violent Communication (NVC)

There are many resources for exploring and explaining this communication technique. Education Outside found it useful for our garden educators to practice this skill when navigating tricky or emotionally charged conversations at their schools. The steps for communicating nonviolently are:

- Observations: Make neutral observations of the situation at hand so that you and the person you're communicating with are on the same page.
- Feelings: Explain how you feel, without using words that blame the other person for how you feel, such as "attacked" or "ignored". This allows the other person to empathize more readily as opposed to getting defensive.

- Needs: Explain what your needs or values are, particularly the ones that you feel have been unmet or transgressed. This disaccord is generally what fuels your emotions.
- Requests: Make an actionable request for the individual you're engaging with. This provides an opportunity for the other person to rectify the situation and feel like it's a choice as opposed to an ultimatum. This builds lasting change in the dynamics of your relationship and hopefully will make it stronger.

- Activity:

- Show a video (just do a simple youtube search) that explains the NVC process and then pose the following questions to the group and ask them to answer in pairs through the lens of Nonviolent Communication:
 - Explain one communication challenge that you're currently facing at your school. How might you approach this situation using nonviolent communication?
 - Explain one difficult encounter that you've had where you wish you communicated more efficiently, clearly, or honestly. How might you reframe this situation through the lens of nonviolent communication?

Grant Writing

Fundraising is a critical part of supporting garden programming and it requires good communication skills in order to convince businesses or foundations to support a project. There are many small grants (below \$5,000) focused on school gardens and each of these requires a grant application that is well-written and persuasive. Some example school garden grant opportunities are:

1. Whole Kids Grant: <https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/programs>
2. Annie's Grants for Gardens: <https://www.annies.com/giving-back/grants-for-gardens>
3. Captain Planet: <https://captainplanetfoundation.org/grants/>

If you are planning a training to equip your garden educators to write grants, share the opportunities listed above (and any others) and outline the steps to creating a compelling grant application in a presentation. Writing a successful grant requires:

- **Planning:** Answer the question: What do I need the money for?
- **Research:** Answer the question: Who will I approach for funding and why is it a good match?
- **Writing:** Answer the question: What will I highlight about my program and why? How will I put all of the information together in a readable and compelling format?
- **Follow up:** Answer the question: What will I do once the decision has been made?

- Activity:

- Provide the preparation framework above, along with examples of successful grant applications. Share any grant opportunities and deadlines coming up, and offer proofreading/editing support. Lastly, offer garden educators time to work on the grants as part of the training.

Assessing Understanding:

At the end of each training, ask garden educators to share one "plus" and one "delta" (positive and constructive) piece of feedback on the training. Do this on post-it notes.

References:

1. The Center for Nonviolent Communication: <https://www.cnvc.org/>
2. Rosenberg, M. B., & Gandhi, A. (2015). Nonviolent communication: A language of life. Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press.
3. Professional Development - Follow Up Resources. (n.d.). Retrieved June 5, 2019, from <https://www.compasspoint.org/follow-up-resource/professional-development>
4. Coro Northern California: <https://coronorcal.org/>