PARADIGM SHIFT/KEY THEME

1. Emphasis is on **problems** (and solving them) rather than on behaviors (and modifying them)…

   - Concerning behavior is often best thought of as a **frustration or stress response** …it's simply the *signal* by which a child *communicates* that they are having difficulty meeting certain *expectations*
     - Concerning behaviors can be "lucky" or "unlucky"
     - Less emphasis on unmet needs…
     - Even if it's not accompanied by concerning behavior, an unmet expectation is still an unsolved problem
   - This will require different assessment practices

PARADIGM SHIFT/KEY THEME

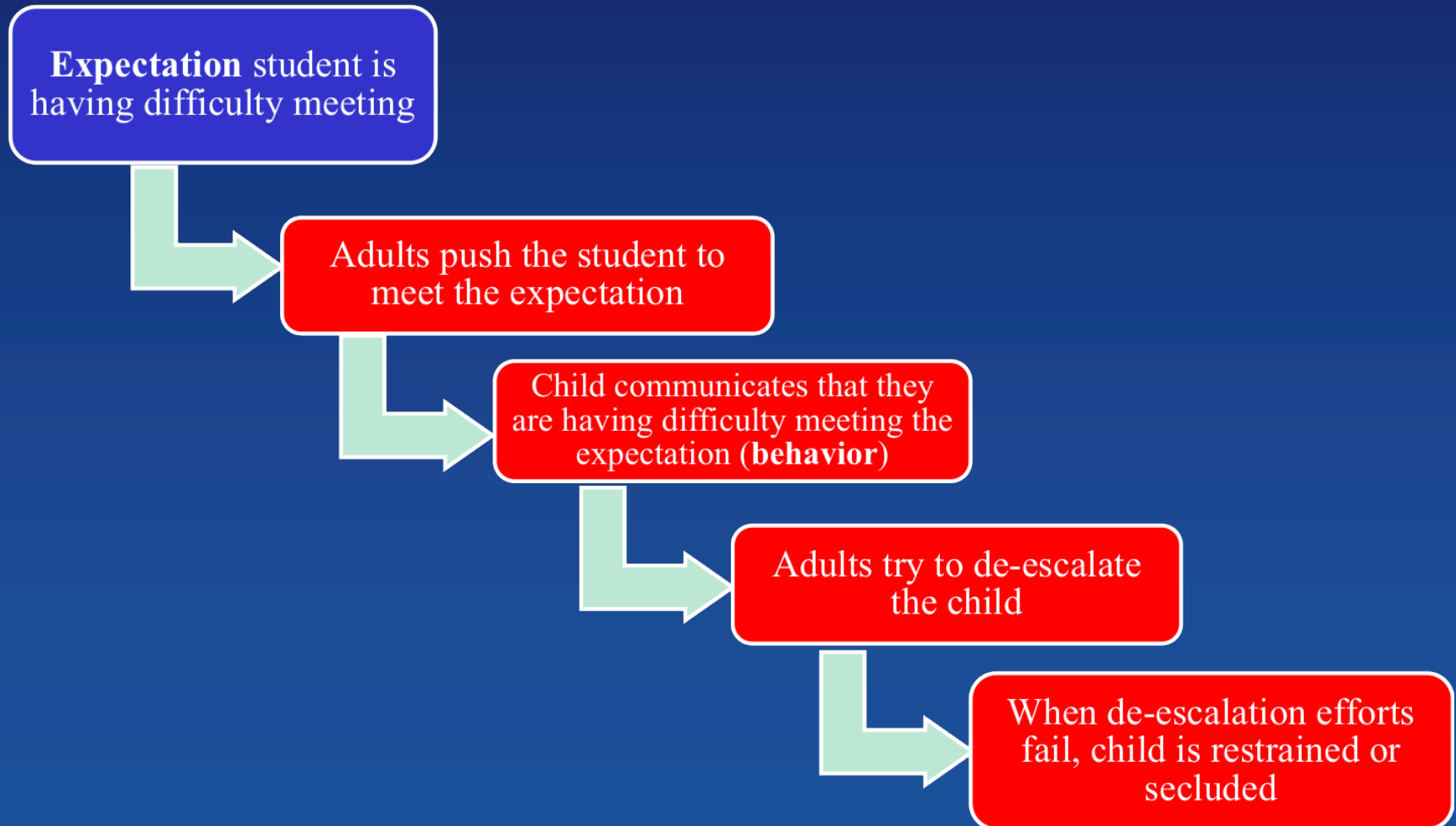2. The problem solving is collaborative, not unilateral (Ask the kid)

- Something you're doing *with* the kid rather than *to* them
- Even if the kid can talk but won't or won't talk because they can't
- Kid is still "accountable" (a lot more so than if they are passive recipients of our imposed consequences)
- T-I-M-E?

PARADIGM SHIFT/KEY THEME

3. The problem solving is proactive, not reactive **(Don't be late)**

- These kids are highly predictable, if we answer two questions:
  - Why do some kids respond so poorly to problems and frustrations?
    - Answer: Because they're struggling with the skills that are involved in responding adaptively to problems and frustrations
  - When do kids exhibit concerning behavior?
    - Answer: When they're having difficulty meeting certain expectations
- This is the information that's been missing
- Once skills and unsolved problems are identified, intervention can be largely proactive

SEQUENCE OF RESTRAINT & SECLUSION

Expectation student is having difficulty meeting

Adults push the student to meet the expectation

Child communicates that they are having difficulty meeting the expectation (**behavior**)

Adults try to de-escalate the child

When de-escalation efforts fail, child is restrained or secluded

THE (non-exhaustive) LIST OF LATE

- Teach kids to ask for help

- Give the kid a break

- Send the kid to the calming corner

- Call the parent

- Teach coping strategies

  - especially the ones teaching kids how to cope once they're already frustrated…*90% should be helping kids anticipate and solve problems before they're frustrated*

- De-escalating, restraint, seclusion

- Discipline referral, detention, suspension, expulsion, paddling

PARADIGM SHIFTS/KEY THEMES

4. Kids do well if they can
   - If the kid could do well, they would do well
     - Not True:
       - Attention-seeking
       - Manipulative
       - Coercive
       - Unmotivated
       - Limit-testing

5. Doing well is preferable
   - Only unsolved problems cause concerning behaviors… solved problems don't

LIMITATIONS OF MODIFYING BEHAVIOR

- Rewards and punishments solve no problems

- Rewards and punishments are distracting…they cause us to focus on frustration responses rather than the problems that are causing those responses

- You never find out what's actually getting in the way of a kid meeting a particular expectation

- There is significant disproportionality in the ways in which rewards and punishments are administered

- There wouldn't be disproportionality if we weren't using punitive, exclusionary disciplinary procedures

- Developmental variability: Better to be disproportional in solving problems than in administering detentions, suspensions, expulsions, paddling, restraint, seclusion, and arrests

WHAT SKILLS?

Flexibility/adaptability
Frustration tolerance
Problem solving
Emotion regulation

These are the global skills that help us respond to problems and frustrations adaptively

Many skills can be taught through direct instruction, but these may not be among them

But these skills are enhanced by engaging kids in the process of solving problems collaboratively

Unsolved problems are the targets of intervention in the CPS model…not skills

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions
THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

OPERATIONALIZING CHANGE

- Identify skills and unsolved problems
  - Helps make intervention proactive rather than reactive…
  - Skills: Helps adults view kids through more compassionate, accurate, productive lenses
  - Unsolved Problems: Helps us focus on the problems that are causing concerning behaviors (rather than on the behaviors)

- Solve problems collaboratively and proactively
  - Promotes a problem-solving partnership
  - Engages kids in solving the problems that affect their lives
  - Produces more effective, durable solutions
  - Simultaneously enhances skills

ASSESSMENT OF SKILLS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS (ASUP 2024)

ASUP 2024
ASSESSMENT OF SKILLS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions — THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

CHILD'S NAME: DATE:

NAMES OF CAREGIVERS COMPLETING THIS INSTRUMENT:

STEP 1: SKILLS

Whether neurotypical or neurodivergent, children communicate that they're having difficulty meeting expectations in diverse ways, including through their concerning behavior. This behavior is best conceived as a frustration or stress response, the nature of which is determined by a variety of factors, most especially certain skills related to flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, problem solving, and emotion regulation. Some kids can demonstrate these skills under some conditions but not under other conditions.

This section is aimed at helping caregivers discuss those skills and the degree to which they may be impacting a particular child. Being aware of and considering the skills that may impact a child's capacity to handle life's problems and frustrations and meet various expectations helps caregivers move away from motivational explanations for concerning behavior (e.g. attention-seeking, manipulative, coercive, unmotivated) and toward a more compassionate, accurate understanding of such behavior. Note that these skills are not the primary focal point of intervention in the CPS model; the unsolved problems you'll be identifying in Step 2 will be the "targets" of intervention.

Please check off a skill if it's difficult for the child to access at times and appears to be making it difficult for the child to handle problems and frustrations and/or meet certain expectations:

- Maintain focus
- Regulate activity level
- Handle transitions, shift from one mindset to another
- Consider the likely outcomes or consequences of actions (impulse control)
- Persist on challenging or tedious tasks
- Sense of time (time that has passed, time needed)

- Consider a range of solutions to problems
- Flexibly handle ambiguity, uncertainty
- Shift from original idea, plan, or solution
- Express concerns, needs, or thoughts in words or other means of communication
- Understand what is being communicated by others
- Appreciate how their actions affect others

- Regulate emotional response to problems and frustrations
- Empathize with others, appreciate another person's perspective or point of view
- Interoception (ability to understand and feel what's going on inside their body)
- Tolerate and manage the sensory environment

STEP 2: UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

Unsolved problems are the specific expectations a child is having difficulty meeting. The wording of an unsolved problem will translate directly into the words that you'll be using when you introduce the unsolved problem to the child when it comes time to solve the problem together. Poorly worded unsolved problems often cause the problem-solving process to deteriorate before it even gets started. Please reference the ASUP Guide for guidance on writing unsolved problems.

SCHOOL/FACILITY PROMPTS

Are there specific tasks/expectations the student is having difficulty completing or getting started on?

Are there classmates this student is having difficulty getting along with in specific conditions?

Are there tasks and activities this student is having difficulty moving from or to?

Are there classes/activities the student is having difficulty attending/being on time to?

As you think about the start of the day to the end, are there any other expectations the student has difficulty reliably meeting or that you find yourself frequently reminding the child about?

HOME/CLINIC PROMPTS

Are there chores/tasks/activities the child is having difficulty completing or getting started on?

Are there siblings/other children the child is having difficulty getting along with in specific conditions?

Are there aspects of hygiene the child is having difficulty completing?

Are there activities the child is having difficulty ending or tasks the child is having difficulty moving on to?

As you think about the start of the day to the end, are there any other expectations the child has difficulty reliably meeting or that you find yourself frequently reminding the child about?

List unsolved problems here:
(or on a separate sheet)

LIVESINTHEBALANCE.ORG

LIVES IN THE BALANCE

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions — THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

ASSESSMENT OF SKILLS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS (ASUP)

- In the top section is a representative list of the skills that are a struggle for many kids with concerning behaviors

- Unsolved problems are identified in the bottom section

- The ASUP is meant to be used as a **discussion guide**…not simply a checklist or mechanism for quantifying

- The ASUP helps caregivers focus on things they can actually do something about (if we only focus on the things we can't do anything about, we are likely to conclude that we can't do anything to help)

- We're not trying explain how the kid came to exhibit concerning behaviors

USING THE ASUP

- Participants receive a blank copy of the ASUP
  - The kid is not present in the meeting
  - One participant is keeping track
- Start with the skills…check all that apply (about 10 seconds each)
- After completing the skills section, begin identifying unsolved problems, using the prompts (about 1 minute per unsolved problem)
- Be exhaustive…identify as many unsolved problems as possible for each prompt
- No need to write the same unsolved problem twice

USING THE ASUP

Guidelines for Wording Unsolved Problems

"A problem well stated is a problem half solved."

-*Charles Kettering*

The wording of the unsolved problem on the ASUP is going to translate into the words that are used when the unsolved problem is introduced to the child when it comes time to solve it together.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

1. Free of concerning behaviors

   - *Unsolved problems start with the word "Difficulty," followed by a verb*

2. Free of adult theories

   - *You're not trying to explain anything*

3. Split, not clumped

   - *"Preferred" and "unpreferred" are clumped…and are also theories*

4. As specific as possible

   - STRATEGY #1: Who, What, Where, When…NOT Why)

   - STRATEGY #2: What expectation is the child having difficulty meeting?

USING THE ASUP
A Few More Guidelines

- Verb selection is the hardest part of writing unsolved problems

- "Early" unsolved problems are better than "late" unsolved problems…push upstream

- Desired behavior is OK…concerning behavior is not

- The wording of unsolved problems should be kid-friendly…the unsolved problem is the "conversation-starter"…it's the "entry point"

- Even if the kid is meeting an expectation sometimes and not others, any expectation that a kid is having difficulty meeting reliably is an unsolved problem

THE ASUP IS A GAME-CHANGER

- Caregivers come to recognize that a kid is, in fact, struggling with many skills and is having difficulty meeting many expectations
  - Are they all important?
  - Can the kid reliably meet them all?
- Caregivers come to recognize why prior interventions have been ineffective
- Caregivers begin to regret the way they've been treating the child based on incorrect assumptions
- Caregivers become aware that unsolved problems occur under highly specific conditions
- Caregivers recognize that unsolved problems are predictable and can therefore be solved proactively

NEXT GOAL
Prioritizing

- You can't work on everything at once
- High priorities:

    - **SAFETY:** Unsolved problems contributing to unsafe behaviors

    - **FREQUENCY:** Unsolved problems contributing to concerning behaviors most often

    - **GRAVITY:** Unsolved problems having the greatest negative impact on the kid or others

THE PROBLEM SOLVING PLAN

© Dr. Ross Greene

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions
THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

OPTIONS FOR HANDLING UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

PLAN A:
Solve the problem unilaterally

PLAN B:
Solve the problem collaboratively

PLAN C:
Put the expectation on hold for now

PLAN A
Solve the problem unilaterally

- The adult decides what the solution is and imposes it, often accompanied by adult-imposed consequences
  - *"I've decided that…"*
- PLAN A *causes* concerning behaviors
- PLAN A is not a partnership
- PLAN A does not involve kids in solving the problems that affect their lives
- PLAN A provides no information whatsoever about the factors making it difficult for the kid to meet a given expectation…solutions arrived at through Plan A are "uninformed"

ANTECEDENT INTERVENTIONS
Still Plan A

- modifying the environment to make it less aversive

- changing task demands to make them easier, shorter, less aversive

- incorporating student interest and preferences

PLAN C

Put the expectation on hold for now

- Reasons to use Plan C:

  - Prioritizing/Triaging (you can't solve everything at once
  - Stabilizing (unsolved problems that have been put on hold don't cause concerning behavior)
  - Expectation management (removing expectations that are out of reach at this point in development)

- **PROACTIVE C:**

  - don't bring it up

  - an agreed-upon interim plan for putting the expectation on hold for now

- **EMERGENCY C:** "OK"

  Fair does not mean equal…EQUITY, NOT EQUALITY

Good parenting and good teaching mean being responsive to the hand you've been dealt…ensuring that every kid gets what they need…meeting kids where they're at…

PLAN B
Solve the problem collaboratively

1. Empathy Step
    Gather information from the child about what's hard about meeting the expectation (ask the kid)

2. Define Adult Concerns Step
    Identify adult concerns

3. Invitation Step
    Collaborate on a solution that is realistic and mutually satisfactory (ask the kid)

PLAN B The Empathy Step

GOAL:
Gather information from kids so as to understand what's making it hard for them to meet the expectation.

INTRODUCTION:
The Empathy step begins with the words "I've noticed that" followed by an unsolved problem and an initial inquiry ("What's up?")

PLAN B The Empathy Step

What happens after "What's up?"

- The kid says something

- The kid says nothing or "I don't know"

- The kid says, "I don't have a problem with that" or "I don't care"

- The kids says, "I don't want to talk about it right now"

- The kid responds defensively ("I don't have to talk to you!")

PLAN B The Empathy Step

The Kid Says Something

DRILLING STRATEGIES:

1. Reflective listening and clarifying statements
2. Asking about the who, what, where, when of the unsolved problem
3. Asking about the situational variability of the unsolved problems
4. Asking kids what they are thinking in the midst of the unsolved problem
5. Breaking the problem down into its component parts
6. Discrepant Observation
7. Tabling ("removing" and asking for more concerns)
8. Summarizing (recapping and asking for more concerns)

PLAN B The Empathy Step

The Kid Says Something (cont.)

ADDITIONAL POINTERS:

- You're not thinking about solutions yet (the Empathy step is a "Solution-Free Zone")

- Remember, "drilling" isn't "grilling"…it involves "listening," not "lessoning" or "lessening" (dismissing, trumping)

- Stay neutral and non-defensive throughout (suspend your emotional response…the Empathy step isn't about you)

- Don't rush (the Empathy step is not a mechanical formality…you're really curious…you really want to know!)

PLAN B The Empathy Step

I Don't Know/Silence

A FEW TIPS:
- Don't freak ("I don't know" and silence are typical)
- Keep drilling

FIGURE OUT WHY:

Adult Factors
- You used Plan A
- You used Emergency Plan B instead of Proactive Plan B
- The unsolved problem wasn't worded according to the guidelines

Child Factors
- Strategy: "Do you know what you want to say but you're not sure how to say it? Or are you not sure what you want to say?"
- The kid doesn't trust you and/or the process yet (they have a lot of experience with Plan A)
- The kid has lost faith and doesn't see the point in talking anymore
  - Strategy: "Was it always so?"
- The kid needs time to think (adults better get comfortable with silence)
- is having difficulty putting their thoughts into words
- The kid just doesn't know
  - Strategy: Educated guessing/hypothesis testing

PLAN B with non-speaking kids
You're still meeting kids where they're at

SOME STRATEGIES:
- Five-finger method
- Yes/No
- Pictures/Google Images
- Apps
- Assistive technology

BUILDING TOWARD PLAN B:
- Finding a way for the child to communicate some*how* about some*thing*
- Some*thing*: preferences, that something is wrong, pain or need for sensory input, often through gestures or sounds
- Some*how*: gestures, grunts, hand signals
- Your eyes are your most important assessment tool…often you're not asking…you're observing
- Your reference point is infants

PLAN B The Empathy Step

Other Responses to "What's Up?"

"I don't have a problem with that" or "I don't care"
- that's the beginning of their concern or perspective…start drilling!

"I don't want to talk about it right now"
- first, assume they have a good reason
- next, give them permission not to talk
- see if they'll talk about why they don't want to talk about it
- don't do anything today that will reduce the likelihood of the kid talking to you tomorrow

Defensiveness ("I don't have to talk to you!")
- The kid may need reassurance that you're not using Plan A
  - *"I'm not going to tell you the solution"*
  - *"You're not in trouble"*
  - *"I'm not mad at you"*
  - *"I'm just trying to understand"*

PLAN B The Define Adult Concerns Step

GOAL:

Enter the adult's concern or perspective into consideration in a way that doesn't cause the child to feel that their concerns are being dismissed or disregarded (beginning with "The thing is…" or "My concern is…")

WHAT'S HARD:

Adults frequently don't know what their *concerns* are…adult concerns are the answer to this question: Why is it important that the expectation be met?

Two possibilities:
How is the unsolved problem affecting the kid?
How is the unsolved problem affecting other people?
(Typically: Health, safety, learning)

PLAN B The Invitation Step

GOAL:

Collaborate on a solution that is realistic and mutually satisfactory

WHAT'S HARD:

- The Wording:
  - Should recap two concerns so as to summarize the problem to be solved (Starts with: "I wonder if there's a way…")

    Generically: "I wonder if there's a way for us to do something about/make sure that (one party's concerns) and also do something about/make sure that (the other party's concerns)

  - The kid is given the first opportunity to generate solutions ("Do you have any ideas?"), but resolution of the problem is a team effort (collaborative)

PLAN B The Invitation Step

- Goal is to demonstrate to kids that you're as invested in getting their concerns addressed as you are in getting your own concerns addressed

- You don't know where the plane is landing before it takes off (no preordained solutions)

- If there are multiple concerns that cannot be addressed by the same solution, prioritize which concerns are going to addressed in this Plan B and which may be addressed in a subsequent Plan B

- Before agreeing on a solution, give conscious, deliberate consideration to whether the solution is realistic and mutually satisfactory…if not, refine the original solution or think of alternatives (one solution at a time…not brainstorming)

- Goal is to solve the problem so it doesn't arise again…not to come up with a solution for what the kid should do in the heat of the moment when the problem recurs

- Battling over solutions define a power struggle (a win/lose proposition)…solving problems collaboratively is a win/win proposition

PLAN B The Invitation Step

WHAT IF THE SOLUTION DOESN'T WORK OR STOPS WORKING?

- Solving problems tends to be incremental…the first solution sometimes doesn't solve the problem durably…many problems require more than one discussion

- Solutions that don't stand the test of time:
    - weren't as realistic as first thought
    - weren't as mutually satisfactory as thought
    - didn't address all the concerns (those that hadn't yet been identified or prioritized)

HOW ARE THE SKILLS ENHANCED?

- Skills are being modeled, practiced, and enhanced in each of the three steps of Plan B

- Plan B also helps build a problem-solving repertoire

IMPLEMENTATION IN SCHOOLS AND FACILITIES

Go big or take it slow?

- In the Beginning…
  - Leaders Gotta Lead (start thinking about structures at the beginning)
- Phase 1: Core Group (Start Small/Build Capacity)
- Phase 2: Spread It (Modeling)
- Phase 3: Spread It (Coaching)
- Phase X: Embed It (New Structures)
  - mission/priorities
  - time, schedule
  - paperwork/referral mechanisms/meetings
  - communication/follow-up/follow through
  - teacher evaluations

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/RESOURCES

livesinthebalance.org
truecrisisprevention.org

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions
THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED