



PAUSE, ASK, RESPOND

BECOME A “BEHAVIOR HAS MEANING” DETECTIVE IN THREE STEPS

It takes time and effort to understand the intent of children’s communication—but the payoff is worth it! Here are three steps that you can use to identify the possible meaning of children’s behaviors.

1. PAUSE:

Before you respond or react to a child’s behavior, pause to reflect on its possible meaning. Think about what happened before the behavior occurred.

2. ASK:

Use your “detective” skills by asking:

- What is this child trying to tell me? Does she want something? Does she need something?
- What do I know about this child that will help me figure out the reason for the behavior?

3. RESPOND:

Figure out the meaning of the behavior to meet the wants or needs that the child is trying to express. When you respond, the child feels listened to, understood, and safe.

Children who are dual language learners may be trying to express themselves in both their home language and in English, therefore especially benefit from parents and teachers observing their behaviors, emotions, and expressions. Additionally, labeling children’s behaviors in the child’s home language and English will support children’s growing vocabularies in both languages and promote children’s confidence in expressing themselves.