

Truth or consequences

“Good management begins with good people”

by Dennis Vicars

Many of you remember this game show from a few years ago (okay, decades ago) which relied on the contestant's ability to resolve a question or problem correctly. If they did, a positive consequence would follow. Unfortunately, an incorrect answer or solution would result in a negative consequence which could lead to their dismissal.

I think we all too often play this game of ‘truth or consequences’ with our centers and programs. That's unfortunate, since the five basic truths for positive consequences in our centers only require uncompromising dedication to each.

1. “Absolute Excellent Service”:

Many centers have great



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program quality, but few have a total, uncompromised cultural commitment to appreciate and respect every child, parent, and vendor that walks through the front door. This total commitment is central to recruiting, hiring, training, and rewarding staff. It's the cutting edge which separates your center from all the other good programs and, in effect, defines you in the parents' minds. It costs nothing other than uncompromised commitment.

2. **Hire great people:** Hiring great people begins with a motto of “always recruiting, always interviewing, always prepared to hire.” Hiring when the need arises usually means hiring out of panic, which guarantees disaster. The children, parents, and other staff deserve better than the revolving door syndrome. Good hiring begins by always having your eyes open for better staff than those you presently have on board. We only get better by having people that are better.
3. **Total commitment to staff:** We cannot ask staff to commit to our vision unless we are committed

to their vision. In fact, we cannot expect our staff to endorse “absolute excellent service” unless we can demonstrate that same principle to them on a daily basis. A commitment to training, professional development, personal attention, and realistic rewards, both financial and personal, demonstrate true commitment. Staff must know they are valued; that starts at the top and is at the core of every major decision.

4. **A quest for constant improvement:** We are either getting better or getting worse, never standing still. With that in mind, every aspect of our daily operation must be aimed in the direction of improvement: classroom environment, teaching, program quality, cleanliness, training, and leadership. The notion that “We've always done it that way” no longer works. Parents, teachers, and government agencies are demanding more, not less, in what is delivered for children. In truth, would we want it any other way? We, like the children in our care, should want to grow and evolve as people.

5. **Leadership:** Broadly speaking, this is the overall guide for the preceding four truths. However, it means so much more. It means that as the leader, you have a plan with full understanding of where your center is going, how it is going to get there, and what contingencies will be utilized when 'Plan A' doesn't work. The plan includes a full understanding of the center's finances, marketing efforts, training needs, major purchases, and how all these truths will come together for positive consequences. Most importantly, leadership means giving everyone the opportunity to succeed. That's the consequence of positive leadership.

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