

PATRICIA WEINZAPFEL



School-Home Communication

**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT SERIES**

COURSE CATALOG AND SERVICES

ABOUT

Patricia Weinzapfel

Patricia Weinzapfel recently retired from the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation after serving 10 years as the district's Executive Director of Community Schools and Family Engagement. In her role, Patricia helped oversee school-community partnerships and directed the district's family engagement work.

Patricia graduated from Northwestern University with a B.S. in journalism/social psychology and an M.S. in broadcast journalism with a concentration in economic/business reporting.

Before working in education, Patricia spent 15 years in broadcast news and taught journalism at the University of Southern Indiana.

Patricia is the author of *Closing the Loop: A Powerful and Practical Guide to School-Home Communication*. Her book helps educators build relationships with families through effective communication practices.



Patricia has combined her two careers and currently collaborates with schools and districts nationwide as a communication consultant and coach. She also works with communities looking to deepen and strengthen community partnerships around student success.

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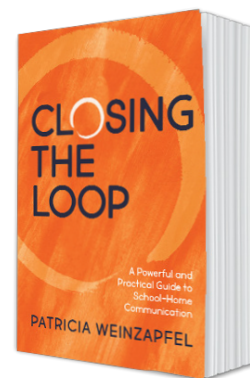
ABOUT

Patricia's Book

Closing the Loop: A Powerful and Practical Guide to School-Home Communication

Patricia's book, *Closing the Loop: A Powerful and Practical Guide to School-Home Communication*, is not your typical education book. It's short, simple, practical, and easy to read.

AVAILABLE ON AMAZON AND AT YOUR LOCAL BOOKSTORE.



"In *Closing the Loop: A Powerful and Practical Guide to School-Home Communication*, communications expert Patricia Weinzapfel, a trusted and authoritative voice in the field of communication, shares a proven pathway to inspire effective communication with every family and provides multiple opportunities to reflect, examine and improve present practice. I have not seen a better or more compelling resource for educators looking to elevate communication and ultimately the engagement of every family."

– DR. STEVE CONSTANTINO, NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED FAMILY ENGAGEMENT EXPERT AND BEST-SELLING AUTHOR, EXECUTIVE PROFESSOR, WILLIAM AND MARY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Masterclass Learning Series

Comprehensive Communication Course

- **Full Day, 2 Half-Days, or 6 Sessions.**
- **In-Person or Virtual.**

Based on her book, *Closing the Loop: A Powerful and Practical Guide to School-Home Communication*, Patricia's masterclass is just that—a comprehensive professional development training for individual educators and school district teams. Masterclass participants will explore the positive impact of family engagement and its strategic principles, and learn how to build meaningful relationships with families using effective text messages, flyers, emails, phone conversations, virtual calls, or face-to-face meetings. In six, one-hour sessions, Patricia shares the essential components and hands-on skill set necessary for a successful school-home communication program.


LEARNING GOALS

Understand why respectful communication is at the heart of effective family engagement.

- **Recognize and identify both effective and ineffective communication.**
- **Draw on the knowledge of parents and schools to design parent-friendly communications and at-home learning activities.**
- **Feel capable of having, and empowered to make the most of, conversations with families.**
- **Engage parents and community partners in school-home communications.**
- **Use suggestions and ideas to design the next steps for your communication work.**

Session 1: The Importance of Meeting the Challenge

This session serves as the foundation for the work ahead. Patricia introduces the intersection of family engagement and communication and the cultural and systemic barriers to school-home communication, and participants will work through examples that lift up these concepts. By the end of the session, educators will be able to better recognize ineffective communication and will possess a strong foundation to create powerful connections with families.

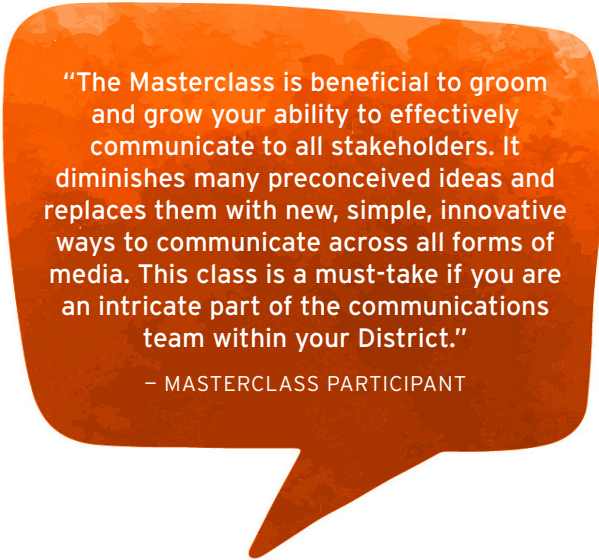


"The series was set up with discussions, hands-on applications, and time to ask questions and plan ahead. From the beginning to end it was worthwhile time spent focusing specifically on communication to families."

– MASTERCLASS PARTICIPANT

Session 2: The Words We Use

Sometimes the language we use to explain school practices and goals to families is complicated and full of educational jargon and acronyms. This session will show how even small changes in wording can have a big impact when it comes to building relationships with families. By the end of the session, educators will have the tools and the skills to effectively "translate" those specialized words and acronyms into everyday language to immediately improve critical written and spoken school communications.



"The Masterclass is beneficial to groom and grow your ability to effectively communicate to all stakeholders. It diminishes many preconceived ideas and replaces them with new, simple, innovative ways to communicate across all forms of media. This class is a must-take if you are an intricate part of the communications team within your District."

– MASTERCLASS PARTICIPANT

Session 3: Information Overload

The amount of information that our schools send home, how we send it home, and what we send home can often cause parents to tune us out and disengage. That's why it's important to give parents and caregivers the information they want to know and need to know in ways that cut through their busy lives. Just as students require differentiated instruction, families require differentiated approaches to communication. In this session, Patricia helps participants learn how to pare information down into digestible, useful pieces that can help build trust and family engagement.

Session 4: Nonverbal Communication

Words matter. But how we string words together and how we say words can often matter more. Nonverbal communication makes up 65 to 85 percent of communication. Improving nonverbal communication starts with a better awareness of families—who they are, what their concerns are, and what may

be going on in their lives. But it also involves an awareness of what else might be going on in your life and paying attention to things like tone and body language. In this session, participants will learn how to become more aware of nonverbal signals, and the simple tips and techniques they can use to ensure that tone and body language are helping build relationships.

Session 5: Challenging Conversations

Every relationship occasionally requires difficult conversations and communication. The same is true in our relationships with families. The key to turning challenging conversations or communications into satisfying and productive ones is to look at them as opportunities to build even deeper bonds with our families. In this session, participants will work through their fears about having difficult conversations and discover how to set the stage for them. They'll also learn how to begin and end a challenging conversation, and how to respond to the emotions of families.

Session 6: Creating Lasting Change

In the final learning session, Patricia offers suggestions to help you create buy-in with staff. Participants will receive practical tips to help develop a school-home communication plan tailored to their specific improvement goals. This session also serves as a review, giving participants the opportunity to revisit any questions or specific challenges they face in their daily communication with families.

Note: Optional, add-on coaching sessions for the Masterclass are available.

Workshops


Communicating for Connection

- **Half-Day or 3 Sessions.**
- **In-Person or Virtual.**

In this three-part workshop, Patricia reveals her innovative, powerful, and easy-to-implement insights, strategies, and techniques that will prepare your team to confidently engage with families as their true partners in education. Patricia packs each hour-long session with valuable, real-life examples and tips, so participants come away understanding the vital need for successful school-home communication, and with a new toolbox of skills and practices that they can immediately use to create real connections with parents and caregivers.

LEARNING GOALS

- **Understand why communication is at the heart of effective family engagement.**
- **Recognize and identify both effective and ineffective communication.**
- **Draw on the knowledge of your parents/schools to compose and design communications and learning at-home activities that are parent-friendly.**
- **Feel capable and empowered to make the most of conversations with families.**



"Your presentation and presentation style were so down-to-earth, warm, and inviting. I felt as if I was visiting an old friend! You were relatable as a mom and humorous. I needed to be reminded to take off my teacher hat and not get caught up in the rush, to take time to communicate with the parents of our students. Thank you!"

– IEL CONFERENCE WORKSHOP ATTENDEE

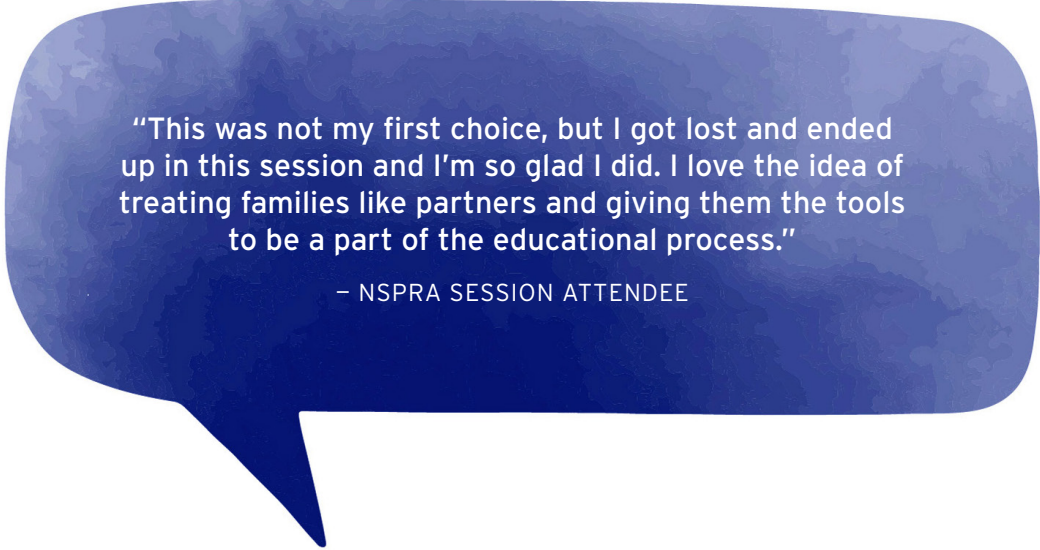
Challenging Communications

- **90 Minute Session.**
- **In-Person or Virtual.**

The need to have difficult conversations with parents and caregivers might be inevitable, but in this 90-minute workshop, Patricia helps your staff approach them with less fear and anxiety by viewing these communications as opportunities to strengthen relationships with families. Workshop participants will learn powerful techniques to shift conversations from challenging to satisfying and productive. They will leave with their own action plan designed to ensure they are confident and prepared when they need to have a heart-to-heart talk. Patricia can also customize the workshop with examples from your district or school. This session can be presented virtually or in person.

LEARNING GOALS:

- Define the aspects of communication (words, information, tone, and body language) and how they work together.
- Recognize why challenging conversations make people so uncomfortable.
- Understand the roles personal experiences and personalities play in challenging conversations and examine how to use those to prevent awkward or heated exchanges.
- Demonstrate the ability to prepare for challenging conversations with talking points and responses.
- Understand the importance of questioning and listening when it comes to challenging conversations.
- Describe and create tools and approaches for diffusing anger when it surfaces during communications with families.
- Practice anticipating and preventing emotional responses by analyzing common scenarios.



"This was not my first choice, but I got lost and ended up in this session and I'm so glad I did. I love the idea of treating families like partners and giving them the tools to be a part of the educational process."

– NSPRA SESSION ATTENDEE

Essentials for Education Support Staff (ESP)


- **90 Minute Session.**
- **In-Person or Virtual.**

ESPs could be a school district's most powerful communication highway! School secretaries, bus drivers, nurses, custodians, and classroom aides play a unique and crucial role in school-home communications. They know the families in your school. And they know how your school works. They could help you better understand what's going on in the lives of your families, and answer families' questions about school processes in an approachable, non-judgmental way. But ESPs can only fulfill this role if schools make the most of their ESPs' expertise by giving them the right training!

Patricia designed this unique, 90-minute workshop specifically to help schools utilize one of their greatest assets—ESPs—by providing them with the tips, tools, and techniques ESPs need to become super-communicators.

LEARNING GOALS:

- **Create an understanding of the critical role ESPs can play in family engagement.**
- **Create an understanding of why it's important to engage families and communicate effectively.**
- **Recognize and identify both effective and ineffective communication by analyzing examples.**
- **Understand communication tips and techniques around words, information, tone, and body language.**
- **Apply learning by drawing on the knowledge of families to compose and design communications.**
- **Explain and advocate for the value and importance of crafting communications with parents and caregivers.**



"Your tips are already impacting my work this morning as I craft a parent communication. Your work truly makes a difference."

– NSPRA SEMINAR ATTENDEE VIA TWITTER

Keynotes, Presentations, and Book Studies

Keynote Speaking & Custom Presentations

Patricia's practical tips and engaging presentation style lend themselves to lively conference keynote addresses and workshop presentations. Her keynotes and presentations are as inspiring, interactive, and chock-full of impressive takeaway strategies as her Masterclass and Workshops.

All of the sessions from Patricia's Professional Development Series, including her Masterclass Sessions, can be adapted into individual, stand-alone workshops and keynote speeches. She customizes her material to fit your audience's needs. Here are a few examples of topics Patricia has presented:

- **Top 5 Tips Educators Can Take Away From TV News.**
- **Right Words, Right Time, Right Results.**
- **What We Don't Say Speaks the Loudest.**
- **Using Effective Communication to Bring Families into the Learning Process.**
- **Sharing Student and Learning Data and Designing Effective Learning at Home Lessons.**
- **Engaging Families to Create Effective Communications.**

"This is one session that I wish would last a whole day!"

– IEL CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

"Patricia was amazing!!!! She was very knowledgeable and her examples were great!"

– IEL CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

"Wonderful practical tips that can be easily implemented. Great session and wonderful presenter!"

– IEL CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

Facilitated Book Studies


Patricia Weinzapfel's book, *Closing the Loop: A Powerful and Practical Guide to School-Home Communication*, is opening up minds and fueling imaginations each day as more and more educators discover how they can better connect with families. So it comes as no surprise that across the country, book studies built around Patricia's *Closing the Loop* are proving to be powerful tools for learning.

So why not up your game, and host a book study led by Patricia, herself?

Patricia will customize the book study for your team. She can walk you through the book chapter by chapter, or take you on a deeper dive into topics your team wants to focus on. Patricia guides you through interactive activities that complement the material, with plenty of time for discussion, problem-solving, and goal-setting. Together, you'll explore new ideas, and spark new ways of thinking.

Closing the Loop naturally lends itself to activities and conversations that create a greater understanding of and improve conditions for effective school-home communication. Take it to the next level with a book study led by Patricia.

- **Customized content and timeline.**
- **Virtual sessions, weekly or monthly.**
- **Time for rich discussions.**



"There are so many fantastic tips on ways to improve communication between school and home. The best part is they are easy to implement. Love this book!"

– AMAZON BOOK REVIEWER

Consulting Services

Consultations

Patricia is available to assist educators, schools, and school districts with their school-home communication programs, from auditing materials to prioritizing strategic goals, to re-writing or creating new standardized letters, forms, or website descriptions.

She can also help schools conceptualize and write grants to cover school-home improvement efforts. See Funding Sources, below.


Video Production Assistance

As a former broadcast journalist, Patricia is an expert in the spoken word, and in creating the connections between audio and video that allow for effective video communication. She is available to provide writing, editing, and production assistance for school and district videos. This support includes pre-production consultation on video content, coaching for interview subjects, as well as script writing and editing.

Writing & Editing

If you need help with a specific project, or your volume of communication is too overwhelming, have Patricia review your school-home communications. She can also help you simplify your communications and amplify family understanding just by tackling the standard letters, forms, or flyers your school or district sends out every year, including:

- **Title I communications.**
- **Special education letters and notifications.**
- **School pamphlets, handbooks, and websites.**
- **Superintendent "State of the Schools" speeches.**
- **Communications around school and district initiatives, such as positive behavior interventions and supports, social-emotional learning, and the multi-tiered system of support.**



"I loved this class! Patricia was super engaging and I feel like I gained a lot of knowledge and insight from these classes. The group we had was open and honest and I believe we all gained a lot of communication skills that will be put to good use!"

– MASTERCLASS PARTICIPANT

Funding Sources

So maybe you want to partner with Patricia to reenergize (or completely overhaul) your school's communications with families, but don't know how to fund it? Believe it or not, there are plenty of grants and other funding sources that will cover professional development training like hers.

Start by reaching out to your family engagement leaders and sharing some of Patricia's work. Chances are, they'll have an idea of where to find funding.

Here are some specific educational funding sources that you could use to bring her to your district or school, and send some of your staff to her Professional Development Masterclasses and Workshops.

- **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA).**
- **Title I, Part A-Improving Basic Programs Operated By LEAs.**
- **Title II-Part A-Professional Learning.**
- **Title III-Part A-English Language Learners.**
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Special Education) (IDEA).**
- **USDOE Promise Neighborhood Program.**
- **USDOE Full Service Community School Program Grant.**
- **USDOE 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant.**
- **USDOE School Improvement Grant.**
- **McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act Grant.**

Along with these, early childhood education and college, career, and workforce development grants often fund family communication and engagement requirements. You can also check with your local United Way and other community-based foundations and grant-making organizations.

Here are some other ideas:

- **Start by looking at the grants you have that include guidelines and requirements around family engagement in education.**
- **Check out the funding that your school or district uses for professional development.**
- **Ask your partners if they have funding. Many times, the programs they bring into your schools include family engagement components.**
- **Pool resources from a couple of different sources.**
- **Write Patricia's work into your next grant request. If you need help with wording, just reach out and Patricia can talk you through it.**

Professional development needs and costs vary depending on the type of training, the number of participants, and the time commitment. For more details and to discuss options, please reach out.

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A PERSONAL NOTE

From Patricia



I didn't set out to work in the field of school-home communication. But you know when you get an idea that just won't go away? Well, that's what happened to me and now here I am... traveling the nation and sharing my new passion.

It's special to me to be able to work alongside amazing educators, and I feel my book and Professional Development Series are not only my contribution to the field of education but to creating a kinder, more respectful world.

I truly believe the key to effective family engagement is relationship-building. And every one of our relationships with families should start with positive, effective communication.

In the past few years, we have learned just how important it is to build relationships with families. It's not just nice, it's absolutely necessary.

But before we can begin to partner with families and bring them into the learning process, we need to communicate with them in ways they can understand and in ways that are respectful of their expertise. Because while we may be the experts in education, our families are the experts when it comes to their children.

I've thoughtfully curated my Professional Development Series in School-Home Communication to provide educators with practical tips, tools, and techniques you can immediately use to improve school-home communication practices and build meaningful relationships with families.

The learning experiences I've designed are for individuals and groups in either a virtual or in-person format. I'm happy to tailor the series to fit your school or district's specific challenges, and I will work with you to fit my presentations into your professional training schedule, whether it's weekly or monthly, throughout the school year or during the summer.

In the meantime, please download my free playbook on school-home communication at patriciaweinzapfel.com.

Please reach out if you have any questions about me or my work. I'd love to talk with you about how we can work together to make the most of each and every one of your school-home communications with families.

I hope to hear from you. Until then, stay safe, and thank you for all you do for students and families.

My best,

Patricia

Want to make school-home communication and family engagement a priority for your school or district?

If you're ready to commit to listening and communicating more effectively with families, take the next step. Reach out to Patricia and her team for a quick phone call or Zoom to learn how you can use the power of your words to build relationships, change the culture in your district, and partner with families to help students succeed.

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