

# **Effective Communication: Patient Acceptance of Proposed Dental Treatment**

*Christina Hampton*

## **Introduction**

One of the most difficult areas to teach is effective communication. Students often utilize technology, social media, and inappropriate verbiage when engaged in face-to-face professional communication situations. Students find it difficult to draw on the required vocabulary to participate in professional conversations.

Young, high school students obtaining a vocational education are required to meet industry standards as they matriculate from the classroom to the workplace. Students do not question how or why decisions are made; consequently, they do not interpret communication as a dialogue between people. Parents, guardians, and teachers have taught young people to do what they are told and not to ask questions correctly. Students are inexperienced at differentiating among personality types, forms of verbal and nonverbal communication, and professional situations.

This unit begins with teaching vocabulary required to understand building a rapport with patients and presenting dental treatment plans. It gives students an opportunity to use and evaluate the vocabulary to determine if it is appropriate to use in a professional dental setting while applying the vocabulary to real world situations.

Next, students will research and read about how to build rapport with people. Students will draw conclusions about their rapport and why it is important how patients perceive their health care providers. Elements students will explore are conversation starters, effective listening, speaking with confidence, and explaining dental conditions to patients. Students will have opportunities to practice applying these skills.

At the end of the unit students will be able to write a dental treatment plan, develop a rapport with a patient, and present the treatment plan tackling most patient objections, while using confidence, proper vocabulary and excellent communication skills.

Michael Kesner DDS is President and CEO of Quantum Leap Success in Dentistry. Mike's practices, Made Ya Smile Dental, have been listed on the Inc. 5000 as one of the fastest growing companies in the nation for both 2012 and 2013. Dr. Kesner, wrote the book a *Multi-Million Dollar Dental Practice*. He states, "People will always find a way to do what they want but not necessarily what they need."<sup>1</sup> The truth is most people

decide to make a purchase based upon their emotions; consequently, education does not motivate most patients to want to do their dental treatment.<sup>2</sup>

Many people make decisions about their dental health based upon the rapport they build with the dental office. As dental professionals we often think that if patients understood the educational basis for needing the prescribed treatment they would commit to having the treatment completed. According to David H. Yu, DDS, MS, a Diplomate of the American Board of Periodontology: “Noncompliance among patients has been linked to many factors, including age, gender, fear, socioeconomic status, and even turnover in the dental practice” Additionally, patient compliance can be improved through visual aids. Dr. Yu states, “an estimated 65% of Americans are visual learners, while only 30% are auditory learners.”<sup>3</sup>

Students need to be able to identify a patient’s internal motivators and how the patient will learn most effectively. Students need to develop the skills necessary to begin having meaningful communication with patients. A survey by the Workforce Solutions Group at St. Louis Community College found that:

more than 60% of employers say applicants lack “communication and interpersonal skills” — a jump of about 10 percentage points in just two years. A wide margin of managers also say today’s applicants can’t think critically and creatively, solve problems or write well.<sup>4</sup>

As students begin to increase their level of communication, students will evaluate how to determine if the message they are trying to convey has been correctly interpreted. According to OTPIC:

All communication has two parts: a sender and a receiver. The sender has a message he or she intends to transmit, and she puts it in words, which, to her, best reflect what she is thinking. But many things can intervene to prevent the intended message from being received.<sup>5</sup>

As students begin to evaluate their verbal and nonverbal communication, they will look at the purpose, skills, application, and building rapport with patients to gain acceptance of dental treatment plans. The American Dental Association has simplified this with a seminar series on the Top10 Skills in Dental Communication.”<sup>6</sup>

The ADA guide will aid students to learn how to present treatment options to patients and to be able to anticipate the patient’s objections and then utilize effective communication to overcome any obstacle and improve patient compliance and practice performance.

## **Rationale**

I am a dental assisting teacher at Hodgson Vocational Technical High School. Students are learning how to become dental assistants. There are currently 59 students in this 4-year track. During the senior year of high school, students participate in paid cooperative learning. Past and current employers have conveyed that students need to improve their communication with patients, vocabulary usage, and treatment plan presentations. These skills are imperative for a successful dental assistant.

The students typically struggle with oral communication, computing mathematical data, logically presenting information, and encouraging patient compliance. Students struggle with the cost of dentistry, because they view it from the consumer perspective not accounting for the health benefits. It is critical for students to understand the information they are presenting to a patient, and present it with empathy not sympathy.

To help students to reach a level of understanding necessary in the industry, one must teach the barriers patients face in convincing patients to consenting to dental treatment. These include: financial means, education, and motivation. According to onetonline.org the following skills are essential to be a dental assistant:

Dental assistants should have very good perception and communication skills. Many patients arrive at dental appointments with a good deal of anxiety. Since dental assistants are with patients during most of the office visit, they need to be able to be able to “read” and react to patients’ anxiety and comfort levels. Social perception, active listening, and service orientation skills are critically important for patient care. Oral communication skills are important as well to explain what procedures will be performed and why, after-care, and other clinical topics.<sup>7</sup>

The student population is made of seventeen 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. The students are taking course work in dental assisting. The students overall are focused, hard-working, and meet the standards for the coursework. The classroom consists of 15 girls and 2 boys. In this class there are numerous ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic differences.

By integrating social issues and data about healthcare, patient compliance, and internal motivators, students will learn how to vary their treatment plan presentations to meet the individual needs of patients. Once students learn this process they will be able to formulate data for patients and put it into an appropriate presentation. Students will compare and contrast data, research social issues, and explore human behavior to gain insight into this process.

This unit will focus on 11<sup>th</sup> grade students preparing to matriculate from the classroom to the workplace. Students have learned to interpret communication in a variety of ways; however, they do not understand how to evaluate whether the intended

message they sent has been received. Additionally, students in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade have been communicating and presenting information for many years; however, they are not experienced in applying it to a professional environment. This unit is designed to improve their communication with patients to an appropriate level that will allow them to gain employment in the dental assisting industry.

## **Objectives**

The American Dental Association has developed a list of the top 10 skills in dental communication. It includes an evaluation sheet with a 10-step checklist for effective communication and patient compliance to dental treatment. Students will gain a basic understanding of the information that will develop as they begin to utilize it during their cooperative work experience. Students will discuss oral communications and identify the differences between verbal and nonverbal communications. Discuss the “team” concept for bettering communication and reducing stress in the dental practice. Design a dental appointment schedule by looking at the treatment needs of the patients and when it is best to schedule certain procedures. Describe the type of relationship the patient and dental team should have by classifying appropriate topics of conversation. Describe good phone courtesy and compare the handling of different types of patient phone calls. Students will analyze a variety of scenarios and decide how the phone call should be handled. Students will listen to a various phone conversations, critique them and apply correct phone techniques while talking with a patient. Students will distinguish between internal and external marketing given marketing samples of local dental practices. Students will describe and compare external and internal marketing strategies and explain how both are necessary to promote the dental practice. Students will compile a patient chart, identify the types of dental practice records and summarize the information they provide to the practice.

This unit starts with teaching communication and treatment planning vocabulary. Giving students exposure to vocabulary they will use and hear in the industry will help them comprehend and apply the content of the unit. We will begin with effective verbal communication, and nonverbal communication: what it is and what does it look like. Students will learn what rapport, patient objections, treatment plan, and patient compliance mean in creating a successful treatment plan. They will understand how effective communication is initiated and continued through building a positive rapport.

Next, students will look at a variety of dental treatment plan cases. They will choose a case they would like to present. They will decide based on the patient’s biography how they will approach the presentation of the dental treatment. They will formulate possible patient objections to the dental treatment providing data to back-up their decisions. They will research information that can be used to support their specific presentation.

At the end of the unit, students will be able to look at a variety of treatment plan

Students will be introduced to the unit using an anticipation guide of the key points of the unit. Students will view incorrect verbal and nonverbal communication videos. Students will begin by viewing “The Importance for Nonverbal Cues as Told by Friends.”<sup>8</sup> According to YouTube the constant miscommunication that occurs online is a direct result of the absence of nonverbal cues, which cannot translate across a computer screen. “Friends” is the perfect example of how important these nonverbal cues can be in the interpretation of messages. Also, “Friends” shows face-to-face examples.<sup>9</sup> Students will complete the friends graphic organizer (see figure 1).

[illegible]

Figure 2

Students will develop a dialogue using nonverbal and verbal communication to share with a partner (see figure2). The students will decide whether the intended message being communicated is the message that was received by the other person. Students will document specific reasons how they decided what message was being sent (see figure 3).

Name \_\_\_\_\_
Date \_\_\_\_\_
Period \_\_\_\_\_

Interpreting Communication

What message are you trying to send?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe the non-verbal communication used:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**What message did your partner receive?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Verbal Communication Used	Non-Verbal Communication Used
□	□
□	□
□	□

Figure 3

Students will view the YouTube video “Communication Skills- The 6 Keys of Powerful

!!!Name:\_\_\_\_\_!Date:\_\_\_\_\_!

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!What does it take to be a good communicator?!

!

Communication! Skill!	Why is it necessary?!	What does it mean?!	How will it improve! communication?!	Communication! Sticking Points!
! ! ! !	!	!	!	!
! ! ! ! !	!	!	!	!
! ! ! ! !	!	!	!	!
! ! ! !	! ! ! !	!	!	!
! ! ! !	! ! ! !	!	!	!
! ! ! !	!	!	!	!

## Aha! and Huh?

During- and After-Viewing Activity

**Complete the following organizer while watching today's video clip.**

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author/Source: \_\_\_\_\_

Ahas!	1.  2.  3.
Huhs?	1.

Figure 5

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Communication skill selected ...

**Procedure**  
(Tasks I plan to carry out)

**Revisions to tasks (ongoing)**  
(Modifications made)

**Reflecting on Progress**  
(How is it going? Do I need to adjust?)

**Evaluation**  
(Was the goal met? Yes/No? How come?)

**My Goal**  
(What communication Skill do I want to improve?)

Figure 6

Students will distinguish between active listening and bad listening. Students will start with playing the telephone game. Students will listen to a message and then tell the next





Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Listening Organizer

Bad Listening Examples:

Active Listening Examples:

Summarize how a person can be an active listener:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Active Listening

Figure 7

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Write five 2-3-sentence statements to share with the group

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_


ats to share with


[illegible]

*Vocabulary Words:*  
Verbal Communication  
Non-verbal communication  
Rapport  
Treatment Plan  
Patient Compliance

2 sessions 135-minutes each

I will introduce the lesson by showing a completed treatment plan to the class using the document camera (see figure10). I will ask students to evaluate the treatment plan for any errors. Students will share an error they see with their shoulder partner. Partners will then share out what their partners found.



Hodgson Dental Clinic

Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

I, being the parent or guardian of said minor, do hereby authorize and request the performance of the following dental services and whatever procedures the judgment of the dentist may indicate during treatment.

I do also authorize and request the administration of local anesthetics as may be deemed advisable by the dentist

Tooth	Service Planned

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Figure 10

Students will evaluate a treatment plan based by activating prior knowledge of dental treatment procedures. Students will work with a partner to communicate the patient’s

needs. Student 1 will give the information utilizing dental vocabulary. Student 2 will document what they hear on another treatment planning document. Then, student 2 will verbalize the treatment back to Student 1 using vocabulary a patient would understand. At the end of the project the three treatment plans should match. If they do not match students will discuss what information was misinterpreted and why.

Next, students will create a foldable book with six pages with the most common dental procedures. On one side students will write the dental procedure using dental terminology, and on the other side they will write how it could be clearly explained to a patient.

Lastly, the students will have a group discussion drawing on their verbal and nonverbal communication knowledge discussing what was difficult, what went well, and how they could improve in discussing and interpreting dental treatment plans. Students will complete the graphic organizer as a small group during the discussion (see figure11). Then students from each group will share the information using the organizer on the smart board or large post-it paper.

Delta Plus Organizer

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Go	Slow	Whoa

Go-What went well

Slow-Needs some improvement

Whoa-Ideas on how to make improvements

Figure 11

Vocabulary:  
Dental treatment plan

Patient compliance  
Documentation  
Detection  
Palpation

Student Lesson 3

2 sessions 135 minutes each

Essential Question:

*How does patient confidence impact a patient accepting a proposed dental treatment plan?*

Students will learn how to get patients to accept the proposed dental treatment plan. Students will complete the How to Build Personal Efficacy survey written by the American Dental Association.<sup>13</sup> Students will work with a partner to evaluate their personal effectiveness. I will provide feedback to individual groups to determine their level of competency.

Next, students will utilize the treatment plan they created and a dental fee schedule to calculate the cost of the dental treatment. Students will need to compute the math on paper. They need to understand how the calculations were formulated to participate in effective patient communication and confidently present the treatment plan. Students will be asked to document how they calculated the fees; consequently, if a patient questions the fees a dental assistant will need to be able to explain them.

Then, students will read a short paragraph using close reading strategies about Americans not being able to understand dental insurance (see figure 12). Students will then work in small groups discussing the key vocabulary words and summarize the paragraph. Students will work in groups using a copy of the CDT coding book. Students will use book to complete a scavenger hunt (see figure 13). Students need to be familiar with the layout of the book but not necessarily all of the information inside of it. It is a reference book for dental insurance coding.

Close Reading Dental Insurance		
Exemplar Text	Vocabulary	
Premium was the most misunderstood word. Americans need to take the time in the coming weeks to familiarize themselves with key terms and assess their needs so they make the best decision. Fully comprehending the plan you buy on your own or already have through an employer does apply to insurance alone. When it comes to correctly defining copay, deductible, and premium more than half of Americans fail the test.	Premium Co-pay Dental Insurance Benefits	(Q1) What does the author mean by the premium? (Q2) Why does the author say "Americans need to take time to familiarize themselves with key terms"? (Q3) How does the author suggest learning about dental insurance? (Q4) What are the reasons that one should comprehend insurance plans? (Q5) What is the author implying when he states half of Americans fail the test?

Figure 12

CDT\$Book\$Scavenger\$Hunt\$

\$

\$

\$

Name:\$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$Date:\$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$

\$

Procedure\$	Code\$	Category\$	Description\$	Page#\$
\$ \$ \$ 1\$Surface\$ posterior\$ amalgam\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$				
\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$	D1110\$	\$	\$	\$
\$ \$ Porcelain\$ Fused\$to\$metal\$ crown\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$				
\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$	D0120\$	\$	\$	\$

Figure 13

Lastly, students will evaluate the role dental insurance will play in assisting the patient with the financial responsibility.<sup>14</sup> Students will look at a variety of dental insurance benefits.<sup>15</sup> Students will utilize CDT coding for each procedure the patient needs to have completed. Once the students have assigned a billing code to the procedure, they will

7 Steps for Treatment Plan Presentation			
#	Step	Technique	Looks Like
1	1	1 2 3 4 5	1
2	2	1 2 3 4 5	2
3	3	1 2 3 4 5	3

Figure 14

Students will work to create a final project of presenting a treatment plan to the class. Students will utilize their notes, organizers, and reference books to complete the assignment. Students will view a set of radiographs available through the online textbook of *Modern Dental Assisting* and determine the patient's needs. Then students will complete the dental treatment plan form. Students will calculate the cost of the patient's treatment utilizing the fee schedule, and previous insurance information. Students will create a dialogue to discuss the proposed dental treatment appropriate to the type of patient to which they are presenting the information. Students will use appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication to effectively convey the proposed dental treatment. This will be the student's summative evaluation. Students will use the presentation rubric aligned with the common core standards (see figure 15).

P R E S E N T A T I O N   R U B R I C (for grades 9-12; Common Core ELA aligned)				
	Below Standard	Approaching Standard	At Standard	Above Standard ✓
Explanation of Ideas & Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ does not present information, arguments, ideas, or findings clearly, concisely, and logically; argument lacks supporting evidence; audience cannot follow the line of reasoning</li> <li>▶ selects information, develops ideas and uses a style inappropriate to the purpose, task, and audience (may be too much or too little information, or the wrong approach)</li> <li>▶ does not address alternative or opposing perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ presents information, findings, arguments and supporting evidence in a way that is not always clear, concise, and logical; line of reasoning is sometimes hard to follow</li> <li>▶ attempts to select information, develop ideas and use a style appropriate to the purpose, task, and audience but does not fully succeed</li> <li>▶ attempts to address alternative or opposing perspectives, but not clearly or completely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ presents information, findings, arguments and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically; audience can easily follow the line of reasoning (CC 9-12.SL.4)</li> <li>▶ selects information, develops ideas and uses a style appropriate to the purpose, task, and audience (CC 9-12.SL.4)</li> <li>▶ clearly and completely addresses alternative or opposing perspectives (CC 11-12.SL.4)</li> </ul>	
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ does not meet requirements for what should be included in the presentation</li> <li>▶ does not have an introduction and/or conclusion</li> <li>▶ uses time poorly; the whole presentation, or a part of it, is too short or too long</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ meets most requirements for what should be included in the presentation</li> <li>▶ has an introduction and conclusion, but they are not clear or interesting</li> <li>▶ generally times presentation well, but may spend too much or too little time on a topic, a/v aid, or idea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ meets all requirements for what should be included in the presentation</li> <li>▶ has a clear and interesting introduction and conclusion</li> <li>▶ organizes time well; no part of the presentation is too short or too long</li> </ul>	



Figure 15

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**Curriculum Unit  
Title**

Effective Communication: Patient Acceptance of Proposed Dental Treatment

**Author**

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**KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.**

- Discuss oral communications and identify the differences between verbal and nonverbal communications.
- Discuss the team concept for bettering communication and reducing stress in the dental practice.
- Design a dental appointment schedule

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT**

What is the difference between listening effectively and communication? How does patient confidence impact a patient accepting a proposed dental treatment plan?

How are case presentations useful in patient compliance with dental treatment?

**CONCEPT A**

Communication

**CONCEPT B**

Building a rapport with patients

**CONCEPT C**

Case Presentations

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A**

What is the difference between listening effectively and communication?

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B**

How does patient confidence impact a patient accepting a proposed dental treatment plan?

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C**

How are case presentations useful in patient compliance with dental treatment?

**VOCABULARY A**

Verbal communication  
Non-verbal communication  
Facial expression

**VOCABULARY A**

Dental treatment plan  
Patient compliance  
Documentation  
Detection  
Palpation

**VOCABULARY A**

Dental insurance    Alternate Benefit  
CDT coding            Copay  
Deductible  
Annual Maximum

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES**

Youtube video on verbal and nonverbal communication

Graphic Organizer

Dental Treatment plan

CDT code book