



ORTHO2

Using the Philosophy of Education in the New Patient Exam

In 2007, when I transitioned careers from kindergarten teacher to treatment coordinator (TC), I found that many of the same philosophies I believed in and put into practice in the classroom also applied to the new patient exam.

As a teacher, my objective was to promote children's learning and development to enable them to reach their educational goals. By individualizing for each student, I strived to create an environment where every child had a sense of belonging. I believe the goal of the TC is very similar. For we, too, promote learning and understanding, as we strive to help our patients achieve their goals.

Anytime you see a classroom where children are thriving and learning, it is most likely because there is a teacher who is intentional. Intentional teachers individualize for each student, they build reciprocal relationships with families, and they intentionally set up their learning environments so that every child has a safe place to play, experiment, discover, learn, and grow.

Intentional TCs strive to build relationships with each new patient. They prepare their environment so that the patient feels welcome and safe. They understand why the patient needs treatment and how it will be delivered. By individualizing, they change their presentation style to meet the learning style of the patient.

Intentional teachers use a star to lead their children through the journey of learning. Each point of the star represents one essential component that teachers use to promote learning and development. As a TC, I use the same philosophy to lead the patient toward case acceptance:

1. Community
2. Families
3. Assessment
4. Curriculum
5. Teaching

by **Christine Townsend**

Community:

Each year, before the first day of school, I invited the children to an individual classroom visit. By doing so, the children were able to meet me, find their chair and cubby, and obtain insight on what to expect on the first day of school. This informal meeting enabled me to build a relationship with each child and then create an environment that reflected their interests and personalities.

When we take a new patient phone call, we start to build a relationship with our patients. We collect and share information, we ask questions to build connections, and we plant the seeds of case acceptance by collecting insurance information and inviting the financially responsible party to be present at the exam. Before they arrive, the intentional TC reviews medical and dental history, researches the referral source, learns the correct pronunciation of names, and identifies if the patient has any special needs. In this way, we can create an atmosphere where our new patients immediately feel welcome.

Families:

When teachers have 25 energetic kindergartners in their classroom, they need a team of volunteers around them. Knowing that each child's parent/guardian is their first and best teacher, the intentional teacher partners with them to provide the very best educational experience possible.

Intentional TCs also need a supportive team around them. At Marcel Orthodontics, case acceptance is not achieved by the TC alone. Instead, our team works together to assure the new patient experience is timely, efficient, and pleasant. Each team member contributes to provide, what Dennis Snow, author and speaker, would call, "Moments of Wow!" Together, we care for our patients in an

Reprinted from

The Newsletter for Members and Friends of Ortho2
July 2018 - Volume 36 Issue 3

individualized way and I believe that is what differentiates our practice from others.

Assessment:

During the first two weeks of kindergarten, I assessed each child's cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development. In this way, I was able to chart a unique teaching course for the year.

The intentional TC asks open-ended questions to discover the patient's wants and needs, and uncovers if there is an emotion attached to the concern. The doctor then evaluates the patient and identifies the most opportune time to treat.

Curriculum:

Teachers follow Common Core State Standards and use curriculum as a map to guide their children through the learning process. Intentional TCs respectfully follow the lead and vision of their doctors. They continually learn from them and other dental professionals.

Teaching:

Intentional teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies to enhance development and learning. They make decisions about which materials, interactions, and learning experiences are likely to be most effective for the group and for each individual child.

In the same way, intentional TCs use educational materials to

take the patient through the diagnosis process. They continually research effective ways to sell treatment and work with the team to lead new patients toward case acceptance.

German educationalist, Friedrich Froebel, described children as plants and teachers as gardeners – hence the word, "kindergarten" which originated from the German words, kinder (meaning child) and garten (meaning garden). I like to think of our practices as gardens, as well, for we not only treat malocclusions and create beautiful smiles, we also care for individuals and grow self-confidence.

I have found that those dedicated to the field of orthodontics are extremely hardworking professionals. Very much like a plant welcomes rain after a long drought, we also need to be replenished and nourished. Strive to intentionally care for each other, for that is what engages the heart to care for others. ☺

About the Author



Christine Townsend served in the education field for more than 15 years before joining Marcel Orthodontics in 2007. In 2017, she partnered with Debbie Best of Consulting Network and divides her time between the two.