



Positive Communication: The Backbone of a School

Noel A. Smith Elementary
Frisco, Texas

Mr. Matt Kimball -Principal
Mrs. Shannon Acosta -Teacher

School Facts of Noel A. Smith Elementary

Staff & Students

- **780 Students**
- **60 Staff Members**

Location

- **Frisco, Texas**
- **Fastest growing district**

Staff Characteristics

- **Average years of experience is 10.3 years on the Smith campus**
- **More than 41% of the staff has 11+ years of experience**

Assessments

- 1) **TAKS Testing**
 - **5th Grade – Reading, Math, and Science**
 - **4th Grade – Writing**
 - **3rd Grade – Reading & Math**
- 2) **Other Assessments**
 - **Math TEKS Checks for all grade levels**
 - **Benchmarks for 2nd – 5th**
 - **K-2nd Reading Assessments**

Components of Communication

Non-Verbal Components

- ❖ *Posture*
- ❖ *Body Movements*
- ❖ *Proximity*
- ❖ *Muscle Tension*
- ❖ *Facial Expression*
- ❖ *Attire*
- ❖ *Eye Movement*

Verbal Components

- ❖ *Pitch/tone*
- ❖ *Volume*
- ❖ *Inflection*
- ❖ *Pace*
- ❖ *Words*

Communication Barriers

- *Hearing vs. Listening*
- *Becoming Defensive*
- *Assumptions*
- *Negative Presuppositions*
- *Lack of Clarity/Misunderstanding*
- *E-Mail*



Paraphrasing Says...

- *I am interested and want to listen*
- *I am concerned and empathize*
- *I want to fully understand*
- *We are a team*



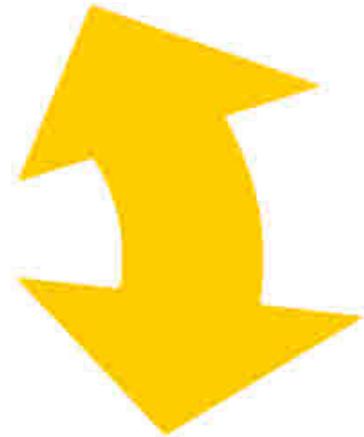
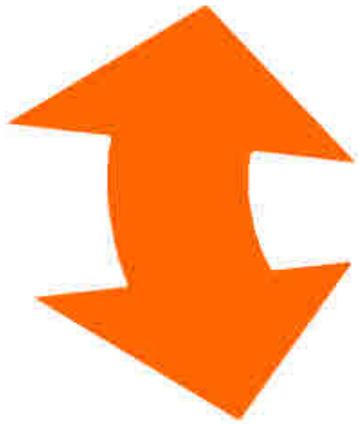
Paraphrasing Can...

- Summarize
- Reflect feeling/emotion
- Clarify
- Acknowledge
- Shift “Gears”
- Give the speaker a chance to ensure their message is being heard and understood
- Provide think time
- Encourage reflective processing



Paraphrasing Map

- 1. Paraphrasing expresses empathy*
- 2. Paraphrasing acknowledges and clarifies*
- 3. Paraphrasing summarizes and organizes key concepts and/or concerns*
- 4. Paraphrasing shifts to focus or conclude the conversation*



Probing & Inquiring

- ❖ *Creates Clarity*
- ❖ *Develops specificity in a conversation*
- ❖ *Provides “wait time”*
- ❖ *Allows speaker to hear themselves*
- ❖ *Permits speaker to solve problem*
- ❖ *Allows for metacognition*
- ❖ *Maintains focus*
- ❖ *Expands or shifts conversation*

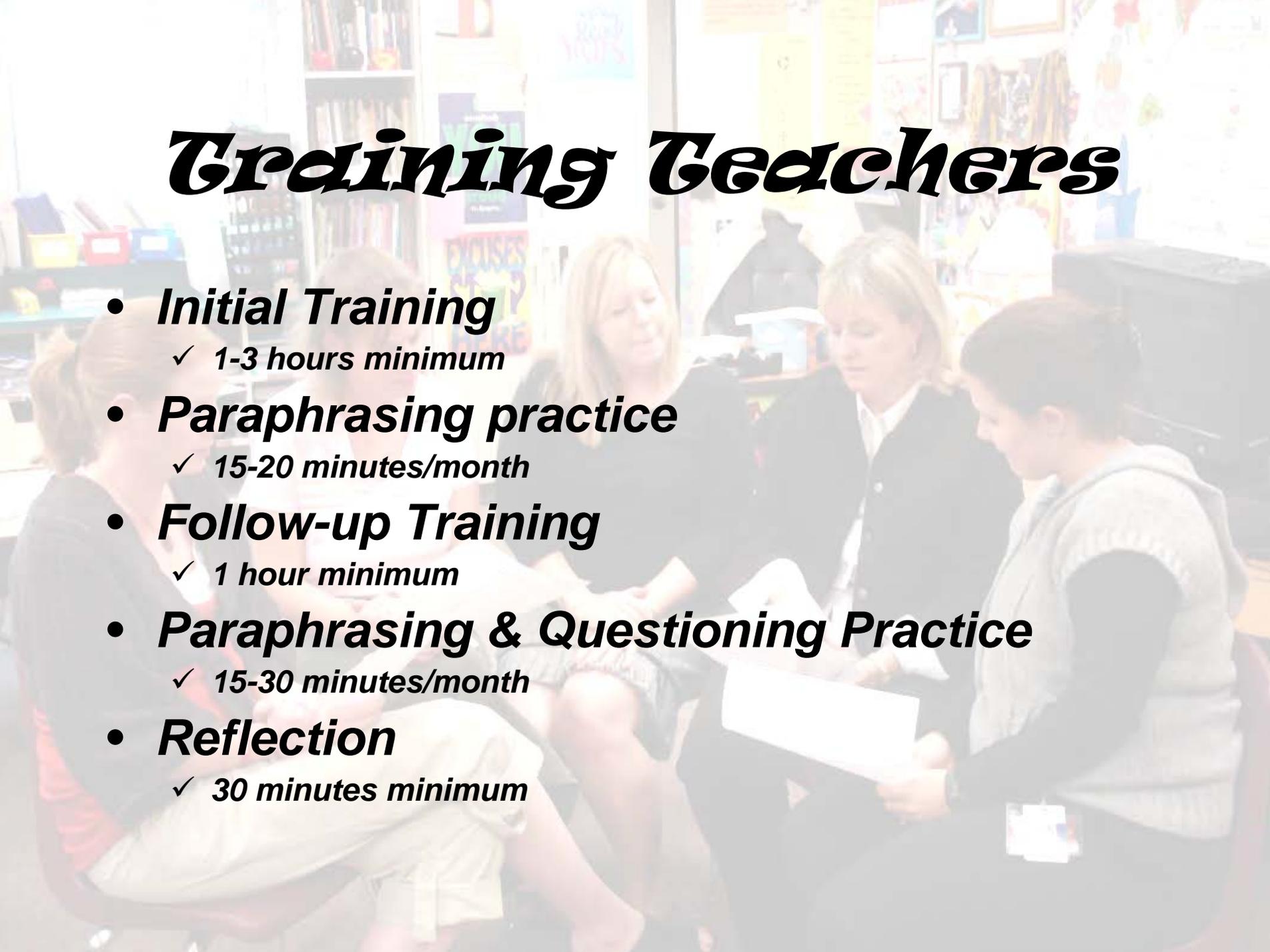


Good Questions...

- *Have multiple responses*
- *Assume the positive*
- *Gain clarity and specificity*
- *Shift thinking*
- *Encourage risk-taking*



Training Teachers

A group of four women are sitting in a circle in a classroom, looking at papers together. The room is filled with educational materials, including books on shelves and posters on the wall. The women are dressed in professional attire, and the overall atmosphere is collaborative and focused.

- ***Initial Training***
 - ✓ *1-3 hours minimum*
- ***Paraphrasing practice***
 - ✓ *15-20 minutes/month*
- ***Follow-up Training***
 - ✓ *1 hour minimum*
- ***Paraphrasing & Questioning Practice***
 - ✓ *15-30 minutes/month*
- ***Reflection***
 - ✓ *30 minutes minimum*

Staff Development Activities

- *Paraphrasing in groups of three*
- *Teachers paraphrase written dialogue samples*
- *Paraphrasing in groups of two*
- *Reflect after parent conferences*



Summary Points

Key Points

- *Communication can make or break a school*
- *Good communication = active listening*
- *Active listening requires practice*



Challenges

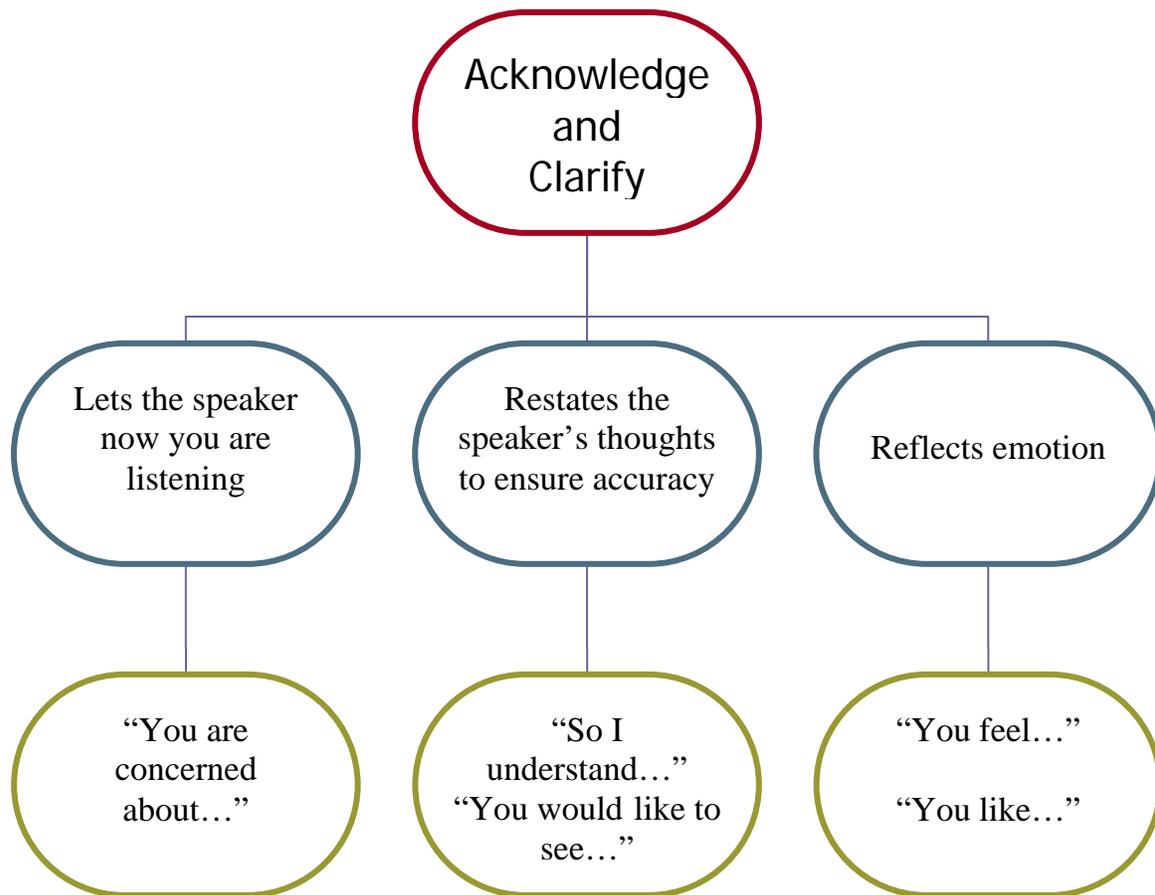
- *Developing comfort level*
- *Embracing something new*
- *Make it your style*
- *Time to practice*

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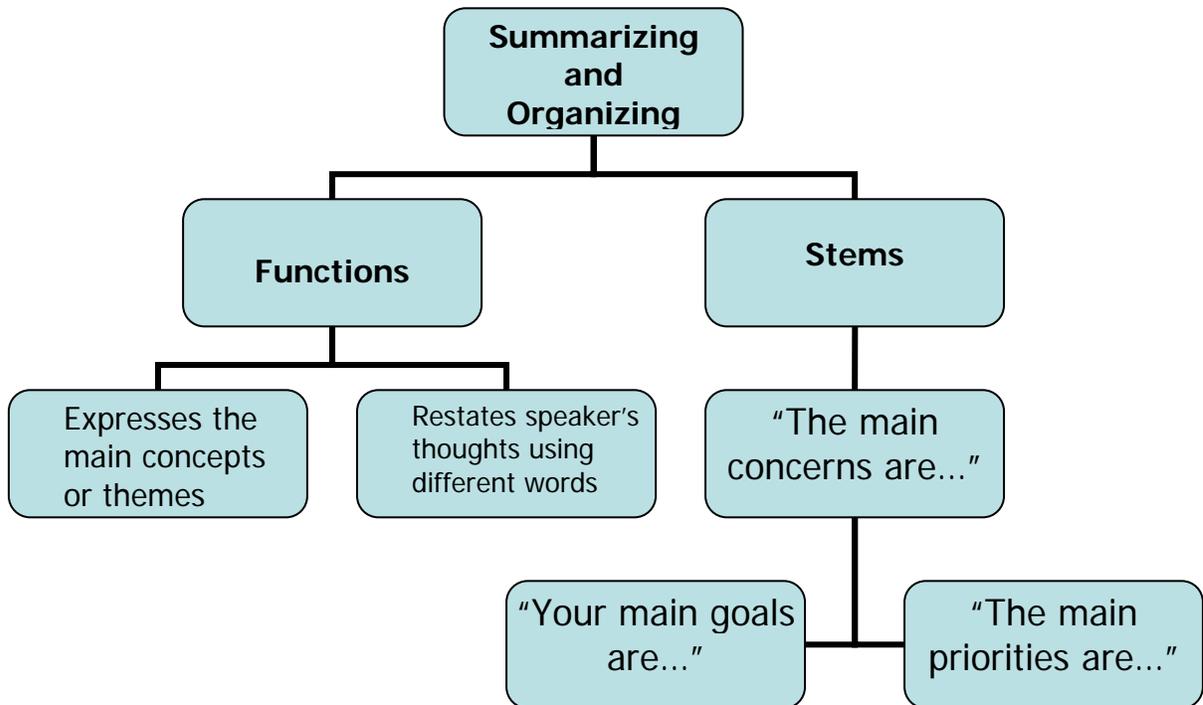
Presented by:
Matt Kimball, Principal
Shannon Acosta, Teacher

What is the function of acknowledging and clarifying, and what stems can I use?



Notes

What is the function of summarizing and organizing, and what stems can I use?



Notes

What is the function of shifting focus and concluding? What stems could I use?

Function	Stems
1) Moves conversation to a different level	1) "So a solution might be..."
2) Extend or add to speaker's comments	2) "So a goal here is..."
3) Closes the conversation	3) "The perspective is..."
4) Provides one last chance for complete clarity	4) "The concerns mentioned were....and the solutions were...."
5) Briefly summarizes the "road map"	5) "You feel....and plan to"

Notes



Probing & Inquiring Stems



- 1) Who, What, Why, Where, When, How
- 2) "Are you saying..."
- 3) "Can you give me a specific example?"
- 4) "What were you thinking when..."
- 5) "What has worked for you in the past...."
- 6) "When you said....did you mean...."
- 7) "If you...what will happen?"
- 8) "How can I support you?"
- 9) "What solution do you recommend?"



Communication Activities

Activity 1

Mr. Kimball,

I've been holding this thought for a while, thought I'd finally bring it up...please accept this in the constructive manner it is intended.

Picking up my daughter & her friend from school yesterday, I was pretty shocked at the weight of their backpacks. I was guessing them to be in the 25 lb range, my daughter's ended up at 20 on the scales. Does the school have any thoughts or policies on what kind of material that needs to be carried back & forth from home? I'm not trying to address the level of homework at all, just the load they are having to carry. Most of the time they are riding bikes or walking to & from school.

Thank You & all the teachers there, you guys do a wonderful job.

1) What probing questions would you ask?



Activity 2

" _____ this is _____'s mom. You know, I am *very* upset that you confronted her yesterday, you said well I read your reading fax and you didn't read. Well you know what, to be honest with you, my daughter reads every day. Whether it's a children's magazine or something. And whether I forgot to fill it out or I didn't, it is not your place to confront her like that and to make her feel like that. You know what, I think it's pretty sad that she has liked every single teacher she's had, but she absolutely *hates* this school. And if there was a way I could get her back to the _____ school system, I would do so. Because she *hates* going to school every day.

She doesn't like her teacher. She says that all her teacher does is yell at her. She never had this problem when she went to _____ school system. And either you need to rethink your teaching methods or there needs to be something done throughout the school. Because this is ridiculous. My ___ year old *hates* going to school. And she *never hated* school before. And I really don't appreciate it.

And that e-mail, I didn't appreciate that either. Because I don't know *who you* think you are. You are her teacher. And I already stated in the meeting that I don't want her reprimanded if she forgets a piece of homework, because of the issues she has. Yea, and if it's something continual, that's fine. But if it's something once a week, no. And I am her mother and have a right to make that decision.

And she never had a problem when she went to _____ *Ever*. Her teachers never gave her that much of a hard time. They kept her in at recess if she forgot her homework occasionally, but not all the time, because they knew she forgot her paperwork, that's how she is. And I am her mother and I have a right to make that decision.

And I'm *very* upset with this whole school system. And something needs to be done about it because my ___ year old never hated school. If you ask her teacher that she had last year, her teacher, _____, would say she's the most loving student and she *loved* her. And they got along *great*. _____ misses her, but yet she can't stand going to school. Well then obviously there is something wrong with this school.

- 1) **What emotions do you sense?**
- 2) **Put a star at every place you would paraphrase.**
- 3) **Underline comments/words that you would ask a question for clarification/specification.**

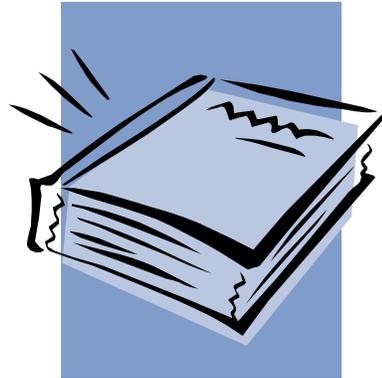
Resources

If you would like more information on Cognitive Coaching, please see the listed resources below.

Cognitive Coaching: A Foundation for Renaissance Schools by Arthur L. Costa and Robert J. Garmston (1994)

Dr. Julie Combs
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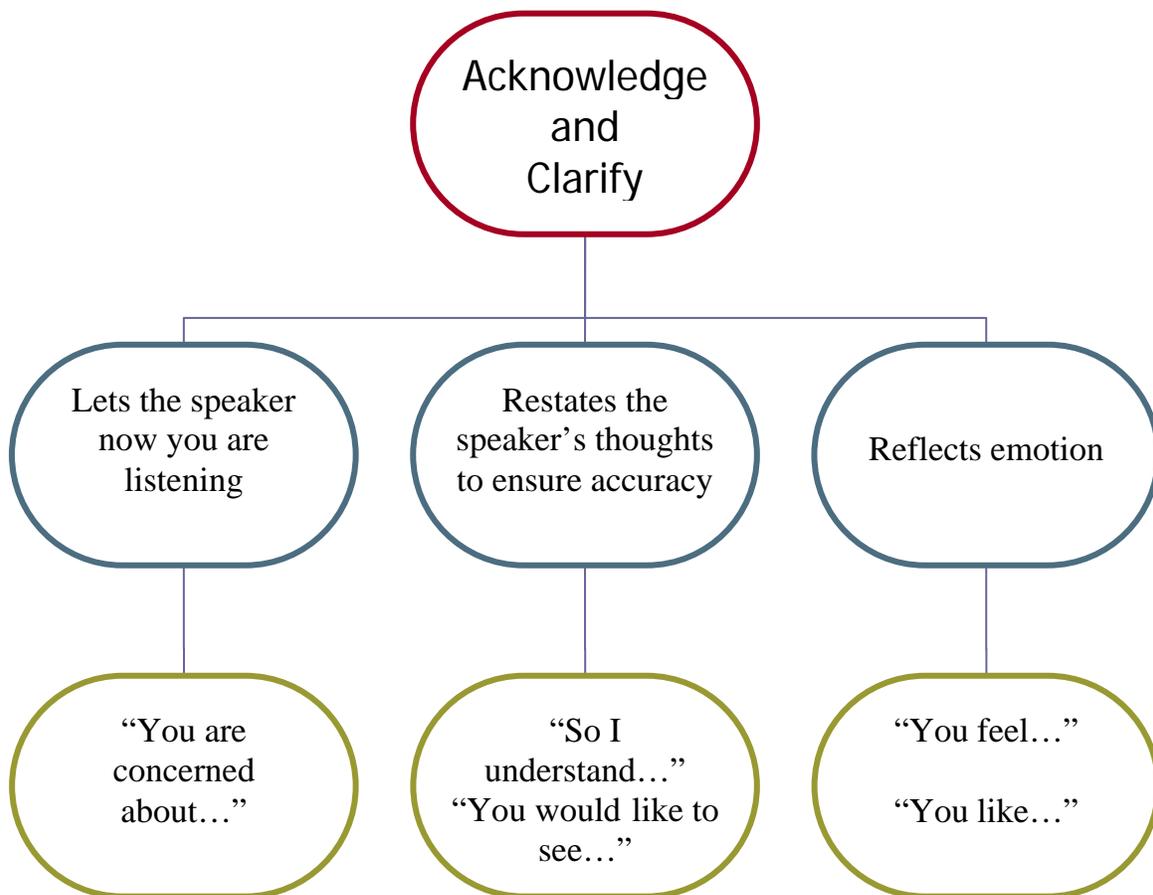
Website

Personality Insights
www.personalityinsights.com/education.html

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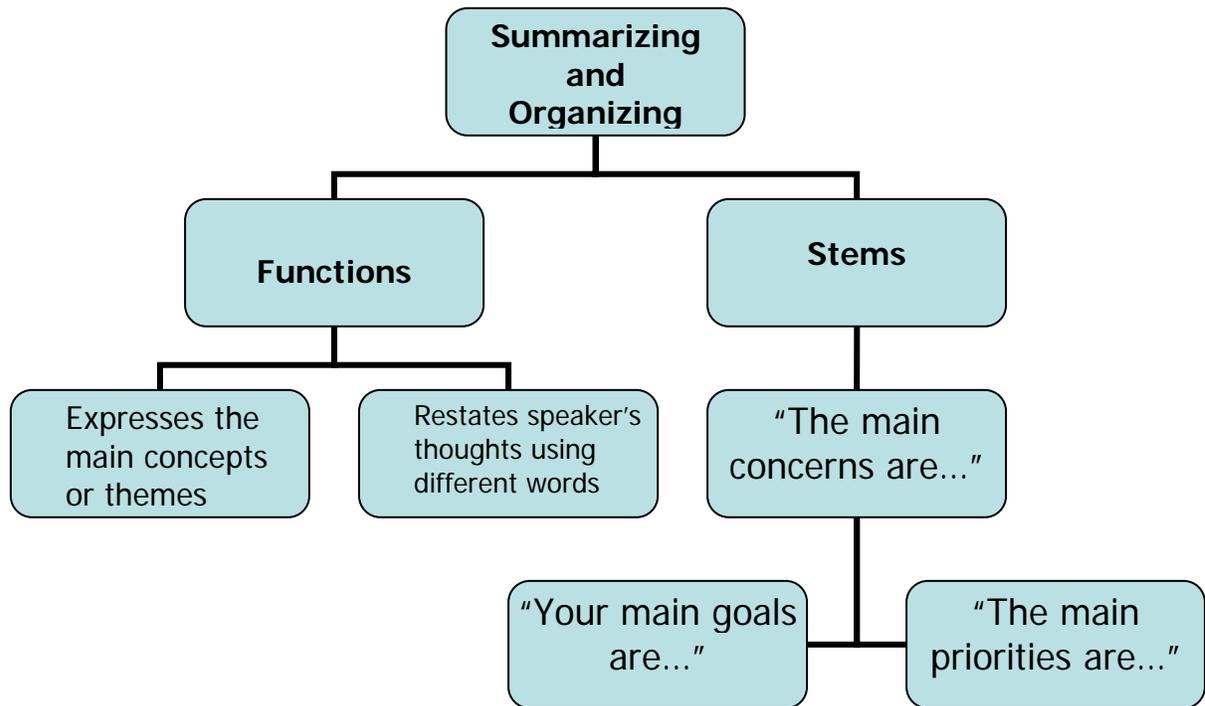
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