



## PAUSE, ASK, RESPOND

### HELP PARENTS BECOME A “BEHAVIOR HAS MEANING” DETECTIVE IN THREE STEPS

It takes time and effort for parents to understand the intent of their children’s communication—but the payoff is worth it! Here are three steps that you can use with parents to help them identify the possible meaning of their children’s behaviors.

#### 1. PAUSE:

Before parents respond or react to their children’s behavior, they should pause to reflect on its possible meaning. Help parents think about what happened before the behavior occurred.

#### 2. ASK:

Encourage parents to use their “detective” skills by asking:

- What do you think your child is trying to tell you? What is the intent behind the behavior?
- What do you know about your child that will help you figure out the reason for the behavior?

#### 3. RESPOND:

Figuring out the meaning of the behavior helps parents respond in ways that meet their children’s needs. When parents respond, their children feel listened to, understood, and safe.

Children who are dual language learners may be trying to express themselves in both their home language and in English, therefore especially benefit from parents and teachers observing their behaviors, emotions, and expressions. Additionally, labeling children’s behaviors in the child’s home language and English will support children’s growing vocabularies in both languages and promote children’s confidence in expressing themselves.