

Parent Affirmations:

The parent affirmations are very personal. Affirmations are read aloud within the Parent Group where no outsiders are present (no guests, no professionals from the school, and no children or other family members). Only team members that regularly attend Parent Group are allowed to read and hear the affirmations. Team members and other parents remain silent while the affirmations are being read. Team members encourage applause after each parent's affirmation has been read. The team member reading the affirmation stands in front of the parent to present the affirmation, and if approved by the parent, provides a handshake or hug.

The affirmations are written on nice paper as a keepsake. Parents often keep the affirmations for years as they are very meaningful. Affirmations are empowering, genuine, and affirming. They are written from the heart and read from the heart. Each parent should receive a personal affirmation. Partnered couples also receive affirmations.

Affirmations are developed over the weekly sessions by the FAST team. Observations of positive parenting are written down and gathered together for review. These observations must be behaviorally-specific and relevant to a particular parent, not generic. The team should describe the positive parenting that they witnessed throughout the FAST cycle. Collectively, the team creates a one-page affirmation document for each adult who is attending FAST with a child. Each parent and couple should receive at least three affirmations.

The goals of the affirmations are to empower and support parents, as well as to reinforce positive parenting. Affirmations are not meant to be instructions or to make any parent feel shameful. Offering praise is challenging because the person receiving the praise can easily feel embarrassed, ashamed and afraid, rather than feel special, recognized and affirmed. Because there are risks in doing an affirmation of parenting, they can only be delivered within relationships of trust.

Affirmations written from the team to the parent are a core component of the FAST program. Substituting family affirmations or other types of affirmations is not acceptable. However, in addition to the required team to parent affirmation, an acceptable add-on adaptation is to have parents and children write private affirmations to one another and give them to each other at their family table before the graduation ceremony.

Small Group Affirmation Exercise:

Read the following affirmations and discuss them in your group. As you discuss each affirmation, consider:

- Parental empowerment
- Behaviorally-specific feedback

- A. If you were the parent receiving the affirmation what might you think or feel?
- B. How might you coach a team to write a behaviorally-specific affirmation and to look for the moments that encompass a powerful affirmation?

Sample Affirmations:

1) Both Samantha and Jane seem to really enjoy the special attention they receive during Special Play. The focused attention they give to the family activities will help them in school. The attention they each pay to your instructions as parents has grown so much. The two of you make a wonderful team as parents. By “taking turns” the way that you do, you keep your kids from outnumbering you. You have been able to watch your children bloom over these weeks. Thank you for all you do to help your children learn!

2) You made such a wonderful meal for the other families and your family. The pride you took in your meal was so obvious to your children and all of us. The special time you spend with your family seems to mean so much to them. They smile and laugh during the Scribbles and Feeling Charades. They truly respect you as well, following your instruction, even when there are other things they want to do. Thank you for all you do for your children to help them learn.

3) Mike you have been dedicated to coming, despite your hectic work schedule. You show such spontaneous enjoyment of your children, like being playful with William in the gym during Kid’s Time. Janice you show a calm demeanor, and you are an excellent, organized cook. You are an active volunteer in the school. You show your love of music and are willing to share your talent with the group, setting the stage for the others to do the same. Thank you for all you do to help your children to learn.