# Closing Videos - Transcripts

## Angela Lenis – Part 1

- [Narrator] Do you have any advice for people entering the field of consultation in the early years or in schools?

- [Angela] One of my pieces of advice would be make sure that your own philosophy as a consultant is very clear to everyone you're working with. So, that means, you know, administration, whether it be principals, vice principals, but also making sure it's clear to the teachers you'll be working closely with. I think even if those conversations are hard, it's important to talk about exactly what you'd like to see and it's not to say that the way I see the role is the only way to go about it, it's just more making sure that they're clear on what my beliefs are and how I want to support the child. So if it does differ from their view, we can, that can be a conversation starter to think about, well this is you know, how I think I want to support the child and this is based on research and this is based on views of inclusion. And, like, let's think about the, how this could be feasible or maybe which parts aren't as feasible so we can come up with a solution that sort of meets everyone's needs. And really it comes down to how can we best support the child? So if the child's always at the center then you both know that you're in it for the right reasons and that you can make sure that what you choose is not about an educator being personally uncomfortable with a situation but it's just about, you know, if this is the best way to support the child based on my experiences and based on research. Then let's try it and it's just sort of being, making sure both parties have that open mind. So, that was one thing I learned in some ways, the hard way, because with some people I've worked with, it was really easy to go in and have that initial conversation and say, this is how I'd like to support you and the child. And what do you think and let's talk about it. Let's try it this way and sometimes it just was a seamless sort of transition into thinking about that kind of following these steps. With some partners it's easy and then with some partners it's not. So, that is probably my biggest piece of advice is if you're clear on what your philosophy is, you might have to have some tough conversations with the people you're working with, but I would recommend having them so that you can make sure you find common ground to again, set the stage as a united front so that anything you do going on to help the children is something that everyone is on the same page about. My philosophy is children are best supported in their natural environment with other children. So, I consider that a philosophy of inclusion and true integration. So, I want to be there to support other teachers and I think supporting other teachers as a team means that we can come up with the most creative and most supportive ways to help children meet their needs. And of course, children have a variety of different needs, so if I can sort of, go in and think about ways to help children have their needs met with other children and then that means both the children who have, you know, the needs that I am there to support and the children who I'm not their to directly support have the benefit of working with multiple teachers or educators who can, who they can learn from and they can grow together. So, to me that means going into a classroom, thinking about what is the current sort of structure or programming that is happening, where are the needs, and how can I support these needs in the classroom? So sometimes that means co-teaching with the other educator. Sometimes that means collaborating even with multiple classrooms together to bring a lot of children together. Sometimes that means, and, and this is based on my experience most recently, where I often had to pull children out of the classroom and the children were actually very happy to be pulled out sometimes for a variety of reasons. And some of which were just because they felt like their needs were being met. So they felt safe and comfortable and that they were working at a level that was appropriate for them. But my question then became, how can I help them feel this way in their regular classroom? So, to me that meant thinking about, even though they were withdrawn from their room for, you know, a period or two a day, how can I program in a way where they can then their work and learning can relate to what is happening in the regular classroom. So, I think my philosophy has changed a little bit where I don't see, you know, having a child in a small group setting as, before I would say that that's something I never wanted to do, but now I do see those kind of interventions so to speak, as potentially helpful for, you know, short periods of time. But the goal would always be to reintegrate and think about creative ways for all children to feel that they have, that all educators in the school are there to support them whether they're technically seeing me as a special educator or not. And how can we take away any stigma around children being supported in different ways. So, I think schools are starting to see creative solutions around that and that's why, in my mind, I have my ideal situation where all children can be supported in the classroom. And that involves a lot of human resources and other types of physical resources that need to be in place so that children can be successful in that setting. But when those aren't there, and sometimes they're not, how can we sort of thinking about the context we're in, how can we still support that model as much as possible and help all children feel successful and their will be no stigma around, you know, children get what they need and that's really that equity lens. So that's not the same for everybody. And sort of, having that framework of inclusion in the back of your mind the whole time. That's how I would see that happening.

## Angela Lenis – Part 2

- [Narrator] Do you have any advice for people entering the fields of consultation in the early years or in schools?

- [Angela] One piece of advice I have for people entering the school system in particular would be when sort of going into a relationship with other teachers, like a collaboration, it's always important to recognize their strengths. So, not going in thinking, oh, I'm the consultant, I know what's best. But really going in with a curious mindset and thinking, just like asking open-ended questions, like, oh, like what's the situation, tell me about what's been happening. Part of my role I always see as doing some of the, at least in part, some of the either formal or informal assessments, which is part of the process, in terms of setting the goals. But going in at the get-go and saying, you know, tell me about what's been happening. And what has or hasn't been working, and really trying to catch, catch the educators saying something positive about what is working, so that you could emphasize, oh, it sounds like, you know, you've been doing something that's really been helping this child. Just to make them feel confident. Because a lot of the situations I've been in, the educators sometimes are at a loss, and they don't really know what to do. And I get that feeling of as an educator you want to help the child the best you can, so feeling like you're not meeting their needs can be really hard. Like when you really do care about these children. So going in and trying to reinforce that, you know, it's not all bad. Like, good things are happening, and really trying to tease that out and think about how we can build on that. So I know working with children, you always want to think of what are their strengths, and really use that to think about how to support them. But I think that's just as important working with other educators to think, you know, these are your strengths, like this is what I see is working, and this is why I know it's working, and let's work from there. So that would definitely be one other recommendation I have. Another sort of recommendation, I mentioned this a little bit before, but be prepared to have very different types of partnerships. I think you, if you start off by having whether it be a really easy partnership or one that was a bit more challenging, don't assume they'll all be like that. So really just go in knowing that every relationship is different, and that sometimes based on just experience in the school system, that sometimes based on what some teachers are used to seeing. If you're used to having a certain type of support from the special education team, and then all of a sudden a new consultant comes in and they have a very different view, that transition could be really hard. So just being aware that every relationship will be different. So you have to, again, go in with an open mind and think about every relationship as a new relationship. Don't make any assumptions, be flexible. So every school, as I mentioned before, is different. And from my experience, a lot of that really does come from administration. So if you are in the position where you're selecting. And this I know happens in school boards where you have to apply to a lot of teaching positions, which are hard to get these days, including the consultation ones, think carefully about what environment you want to work in. Sometimes the, if you can be selective in where you'd like to work, and your model of consultation is more of that inclusive approach, sort of try and reach out to schools that are promoting that, and you see that as a clear vision of the school because it will make that consultation process flow more seamlessly.

## Christa Leeder

- [Narrator] Do you have any advice for people entering the fields of consultation in the early years or in schools?

-[Christa] My first advice would be to remember you're always a guest. You're a guest in that environment and you're there to support, coach and model. That if you're going in with the assumption that you know more or the assumption that you wanna tell them what to do differently, you may experience your own barriers of follow through because the team doesn't feel that it's a collaborative approach. The moment you feel that the process is difficult or the moment you feel that the process isn't moving as forward and at a pace that you are comfortable with or that you want it to be, it's an opportunity to step back and identify your role, and check in with how the goals are appropriate for the center. Sometimes when you're working with a program, they may feel intimidated by your presence. So they may not feel comfortable coming to you to say this isn't really working. But laying those expectations out front to say you know, we're here as a team. If something's not working, as a team we're gonna revise it and look to see what we can do differently.

## Andrea Ferguson

- [Narrator] Do you have any advice for people entering the field of consultation in the early years or in schools?

- [Andrea] Draw upon your own experiences of what it is that propelled you to be interested in the first place. What is the passion that you have within you and what's compelling you to find it and stay in that space for a little bit, without sounding too open and grand about that. That always is your go to place. So, it's what's going to help you when you need to find that extra patience. When you need to find the compassion for the family that they're... Why am I giving this person so much extra time and why is it taking so long? You're gonna find, in yourself, that this is what the families and you can share that's the common space you can be in. Be knowledgeable, because it's important that families are empowered with new, current, and critical information. So, understanding your field and your recent field and it changes very, very quickly. Specifically about understanding what words to use, so that you're not alienating, by accident, any groups of people, and always remember the family. That child is attached to a family, be it small, big, or large, and that you're not treating the diagnosis, you're treating a child, and that child's support systems and units that work together to support them, it's important to consider them. So, when a family of 9 shows up to your meeting because they wanna talk about their child, it's important to understand that these are lot of people who are interested and to always keep that open to and available to all the support systems. Know your IFSP. Know your family plans and support plans. Continue to remember them and be on top of communicating regularly with that family, because minutes feel like hours. Every minute that that family member is trying to do the best they can for their child, it's very, very challenging. So, as a teacher in the classroom, keeping your own stress in check, understanding any of the diagnoses and what it requires to support that child. Understanding the limits that you have yourself. Being honest about them and having support for yourself. So critical that you don't feel like a endless sounding moored for difficult situations and there are times when it's going to become very difficult. The first time a child passes away while you're in the industry is gonna be a hard time and you need to be prepared. I would hope that this wouldn't impact on your career and your career choices, but anytime you can offer bilingualism, it's incredible. Any time you have any multicultural or other cultural references that you can share authentically, as a personal experience, specifically language, but also not to forget to support families with their home language. Anytime you can offer any information in a home language, it's very, very important. So, that's part of the communication piece, but specifically I found that that was one of the key components of making sure that I was "supporting" a family well, and that was when that one barrier didn't have to be overcome as well. As the resource teacher and what they need as a skillset, I think it's important to understand your energy and what you're giving off in terms of what you bring to the interaction with the family. It's going to be most probably a very difficult interaction because the family will feel vulnerable at some point, and they'll be sharing very intimate details with you and the family, ah, you, a big part as a resource teacher. The second thing is just understanding that power of positivity. So any encouraging words for the transition now, or this journey that they're going through and this next stage, is very important to understand what words you use to encourage. And I find myself using words like I'm here to help you, I want this to work, I'm interested in helping you and your family, I'd like to advocate for you if you'd allow me, and asking permission on where it is you can share and help families.