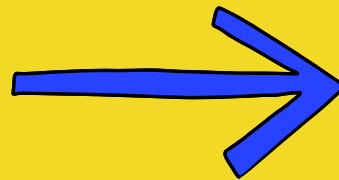




# WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF YOUR FACE?

---

Communicating  
with Adolescents



# outcomes

## What's the Purpose of Your Face

- Learn and be able to utilize the B.R.I.E.F. strategy to increase the quality of conversations with adolescents
- Identify conversation crashers that can deter the progress of a conversation



# CRISTIN NOWAK

## Professional Experience

- 4 years Ele teacher
- 3 years MS teacher
- 6 years MS admin
- 4 years HS teacher
- 7 years HS admin

Currently assistant principal at  
William Chrisman High School



# MOVING INTO ADOLESCENCE

01

Normal and necessary  
work of pulling apart from  
their parents

02

Begin **establishing their  
own identity** -- apart  
from their adults

03

Have to **talk *with* them**,  
not *to* them, or *at* them.

04





Kids will learn to make  
smart decisions **with  
practice.**

05

Age of male risk taking is  
the **highest at 14.38**,  
missing the data for  
females, but we can make  
inferences

06

We (adults) need to be  
***assistant managers.***



**“KIDS WHO FEEL COMFORTABLE  
TALKING WITH CARING ADULTS  
ABOUT THEIR PROBLEMS ARE  
HEALTHIER, HAPPIER, MORE  
RESILIENT, AND BETTER POISED  
FOR SUCCESS.”**

–Michelle Icard.

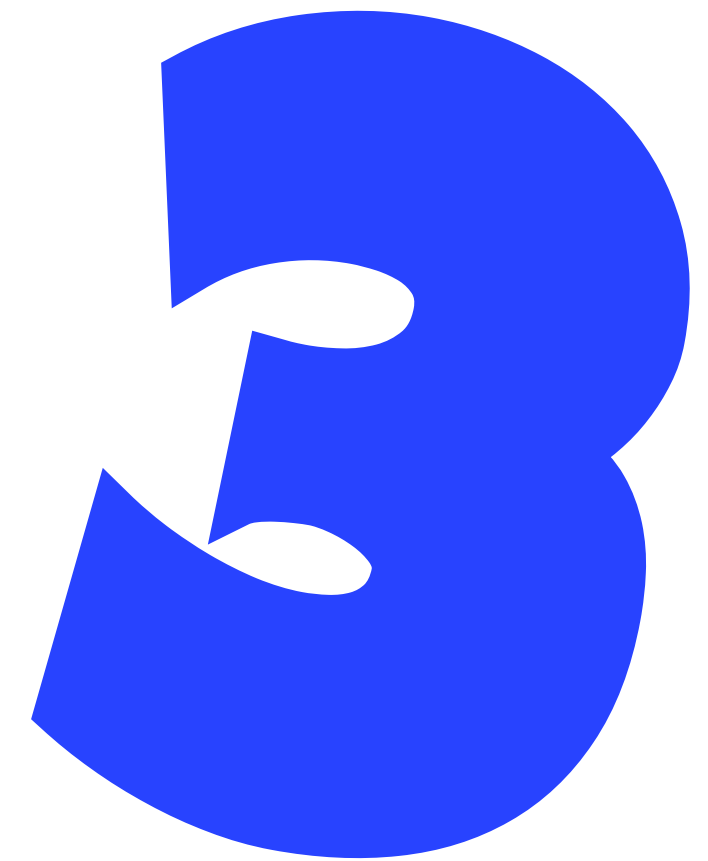


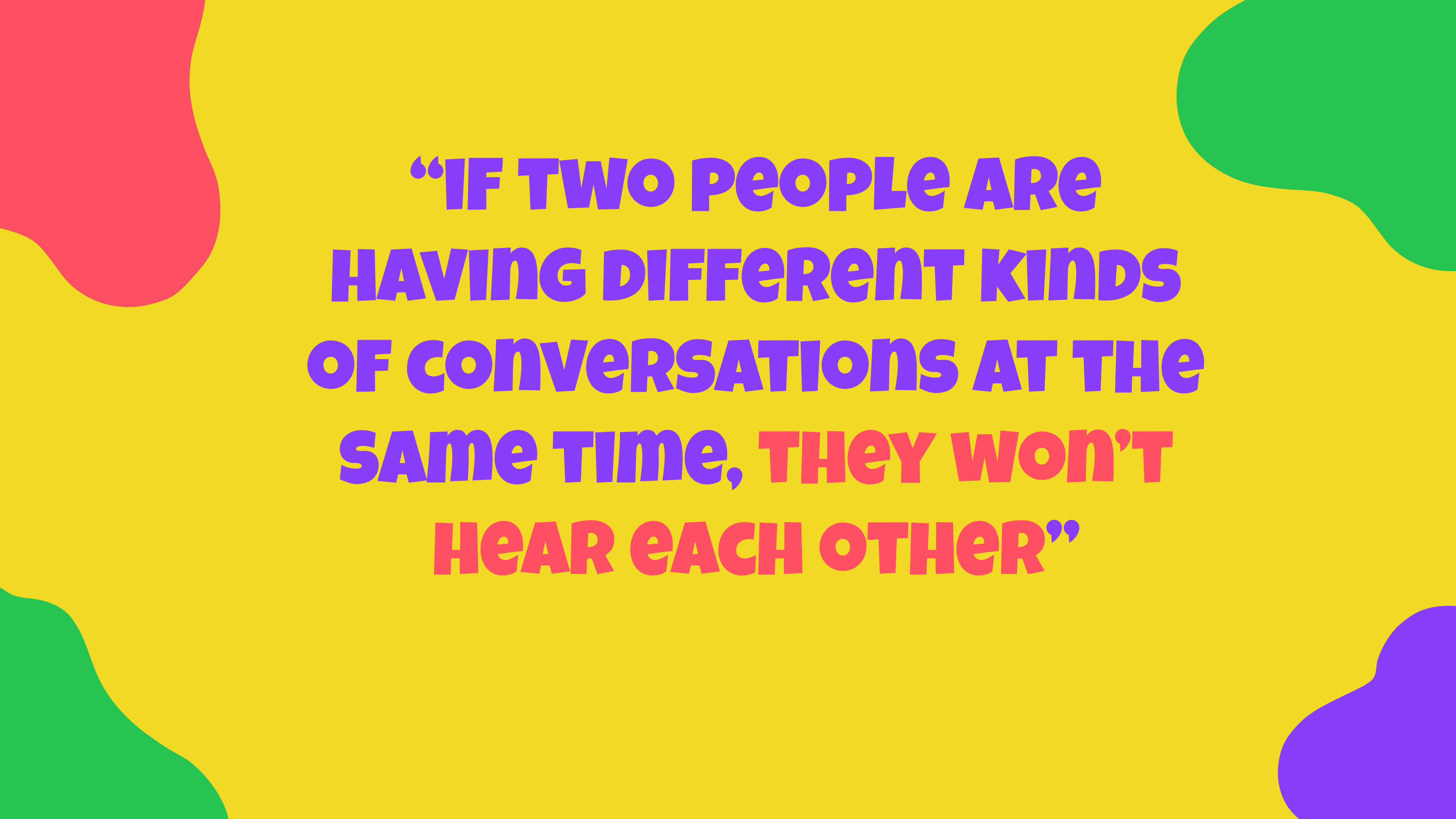
# WHAT COULD GO WRONG?



# PURPOSES OF CONVERSATION

1. Practical -- Making plans, solving problems
2. Emotional -- I want you to empathize and understand; don't solve the problem
3. Social -- How do we relate to each other





**“IF TWO PEOPLE ARE  
HAVING DIFFERENT KINDS  
OF CONVERSATIONS AT THE  
SAME TIME, THEY WON'T  
HEAR EACH OTHER”**





**SO.... HOW DO WE TALK  
TO THEM -- OR GET THEM  
TO TALK TO US?**

# FILL IN THE BLANKS

# Talking with adolescents is like

fill in the sport or activity

because

fill in your reason



**PLEASE REMEMBER THIS...**

**\* IF THEY'RE PUSHING BACK, THEY'RE NOT  
READY FOR A GOOD CONVERSATION**

**\* YOU CAN FORCE A LECTURE, BUT YOU  
CAN'T FORCE A CONVERSATION**

# Be B.R.I.E.F

**B**

## BEGIN PEACEFULLY

Unemotional observation  
Ask students to explain  
Make a scheduling request.

**R**

## RELATE TO YOUR KID

Consider the endgame?  
Avoid words that will make them  
immediately defensive

**I**

## INTERVIEW TO COLLECT DATA

Get a better understanding of your kid's version  
A neutral fact finding mission

**E**

## ECHO WHAT YOU'RE

## HEARING

It sounds like or I'm hearing  
Summarize  
Use their words

**F**

## Feedback

Offer suggestions, make new rules  
Don't pile on other problems

# BEGIN PEACEFULLY



- Hardest part is getting started without the teen shutting down.
- Begin with unemotional observation
  - "So, it looks like report cards came out – I saw your grades weren't as we expected."
- Ask if they can explain to you
  - Your grades look different than what I expected. Are they what you expected? Is there anything you need to tell me?
- Make a scheduling request
  - "Reports cards came out today and I think we should debrief. Is before or after dinner better for you?"



# RELATE TO YOUR KID



## ● They start defensive!

- AND most can't accurately read facial expressions or interpret tone of voice.

## ● Breathe!

- "It's tough when you finally have to be honest, but I find it feels better to stop hiding things from people who want to help us"
- "This is hard. I'm sure you feel a bunch of emotions right now. Don't worry. Together we can figure out where to go from here."
- "I remember times when my grades dipped and it felt awful to get behind. It will take some hard work to pull your grades back up, but with focus and support you can do it."



# RELATE TO YOUR KID

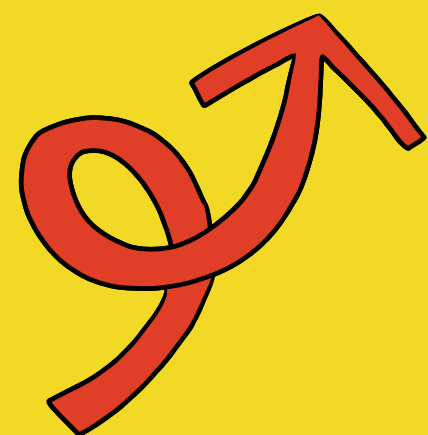


- BREATHE! Even when you want to say all of the things. . . .
  - “It’s tough when you finally have to be honest, but I find it feels better to stop hiding things from people who want to help us”
  - “This is hard. I’m sure you feel a bunch of emotions right now. Don’t worry. Together we can figure out where to go from here.”
  - “I remember times when my grades dipped and it felt awful to get behind. It will take some hard work to pull your grades back up, but with focus and support you can do it.”

# INTERVIEW TO COLLECT DATA



- Get a better understanding of their version of the truth
- Be a good, slightly detached district attorney . . . .
  - “At what point did you realize your grades were slipping?”
  - “What do you think were the biggest reasons for the slip?”
  - “Did you consider talking with me about it?”
  - “What did you think would happen when I got the report card?”



**ARE YOU SURE ABOUT  
THAT 5 MINUTES?**

# ECHO WHAT YOU'RE HEARING

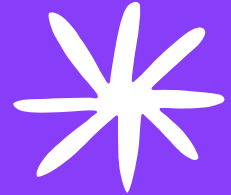


- This is about part validation and part comprehension
- Sounds Like. . .
  - "It sounds like you had an idea your grades were slipping, but felt like you could handle it on your own?"
- Summarize Key Facts
  - "Okay, so you thought your grades were still on track and this comes as a surprise to you too"
- Use Their Words in a Question
  - "Am I right that you feel like this is mostly the teacher's fault?"



# FEEDBACK

- You finally get to provide feedback! Offering suggestions, guidance, or making new rules.
  - Most open to feedback when you ask if they're open to it.
  - There will be times you can't wait and you have to put the strong boundaries in place -- in these cases, don't ask.



**DESCRIBE THE WORST  
MANAGER/BOSS YOU  
ever HAD**

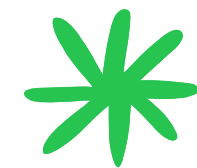
**WHen mIDDLE SCHOOlERS  
AND TEENS ARE ASKED  
WHAT BOTHERS THEM  
ABOUT THEIR PARENTS --  
IT'S THE SAME THINGS!**



# **We need To Be ASSISTANT MANAGERS**

During their tween and adolescent years the prefrontal cortex takes a break -- kind of like when a manager at a store goes on break. They need us to act as assistant managers, not take over, but to support them.

# MAKING MISTAKES





# INABILITY TO READ FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

- Research from a Harvard teaching hospital
  - Small study, but very important for those who interact with adolescents
  - Adults were put into an MRI and showed photos of people's faces. They were asked to identify basic emotions by reading their faces. Adults were able to do this ***nearly 100% of the time.***

## MAKE A PREDICTION ABOUT THE TEENS!

# ONLY 50%

What's the difference?

- MRI showed that the adults used their prefrontal cortex to read expressions
- Teens used their amygdala – the part of the brain that houses emotions and helps decide how to respond

The shift doesn't happen until early to mid-twenties!

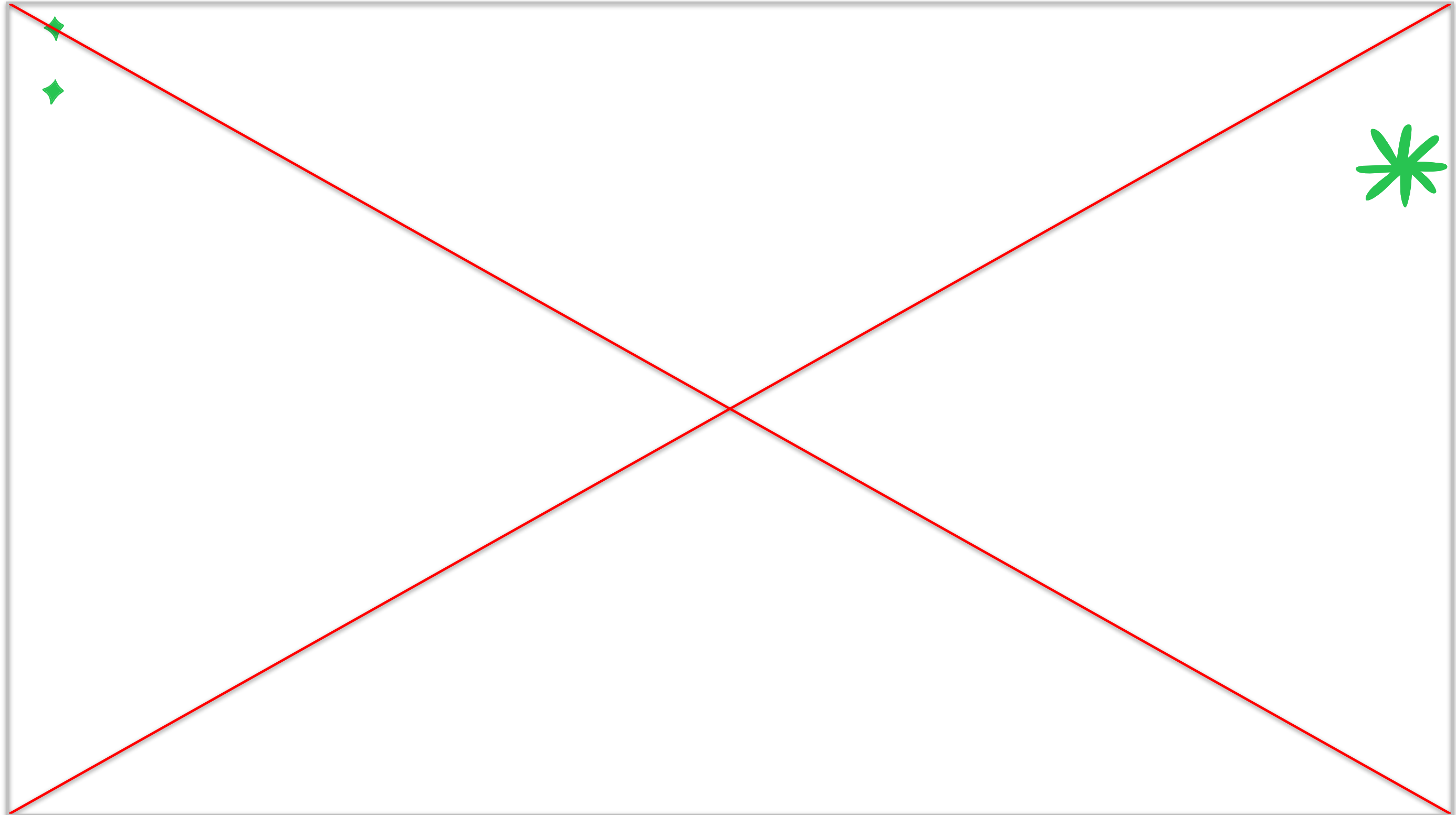




**“WHY YOU MAD?  
FIX YOUR FACE”**

–Bruno Mars

# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?





# **WRITE A LIST OF ALL THE REASONS WHY YOU FURROW YOUR BROW**

Or someone else if you are not a brow furrower



# THE BOTOX BROW



- An expressionless face is better!
- This will be perceived as “not judging”
- Also known as “soft eyes.” And you can’t yell with soft eyes

# OTHER THINGS TO DO



- Appear disinterested -- inevitably when busy, this will be when they will want to tell you the most
- Multi-task -- cooking dinner, driving a car, sorting mail, grading papers, responding to emails

# PERSONAL EXAMPLES



# conVeRSATIOn CRASHERS

01

Don't make assumptions about how they feel, has felt, or will feel.

02

Don't be indirect about what you need

03

No empty threats -- and don't threaten therapists!



# conVeRSATIOn CRASHERS



04

Don't be passive-aggressive. This tends to be our way of acting as victims

05

Don't make yourself the center of the story

06

Don't drag it out. Do you want the last word or to end in a way the other person can come back to you?



# FILL IN THE BLANKS

# Talking with adolescents is like

fill in the sport or activity

because

fill in your reason





Talking with  
adolescents is like  
swimming a winding river

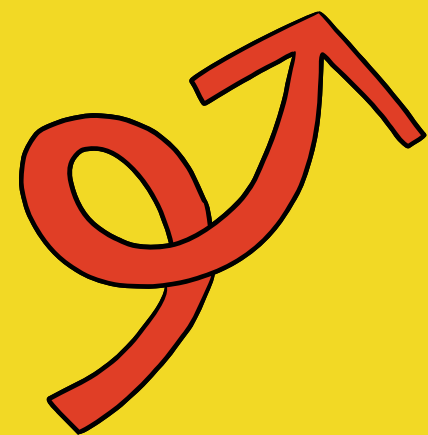
it requires flexibility  
and patience as their  
thoughts ebb and  
flow



# in summary



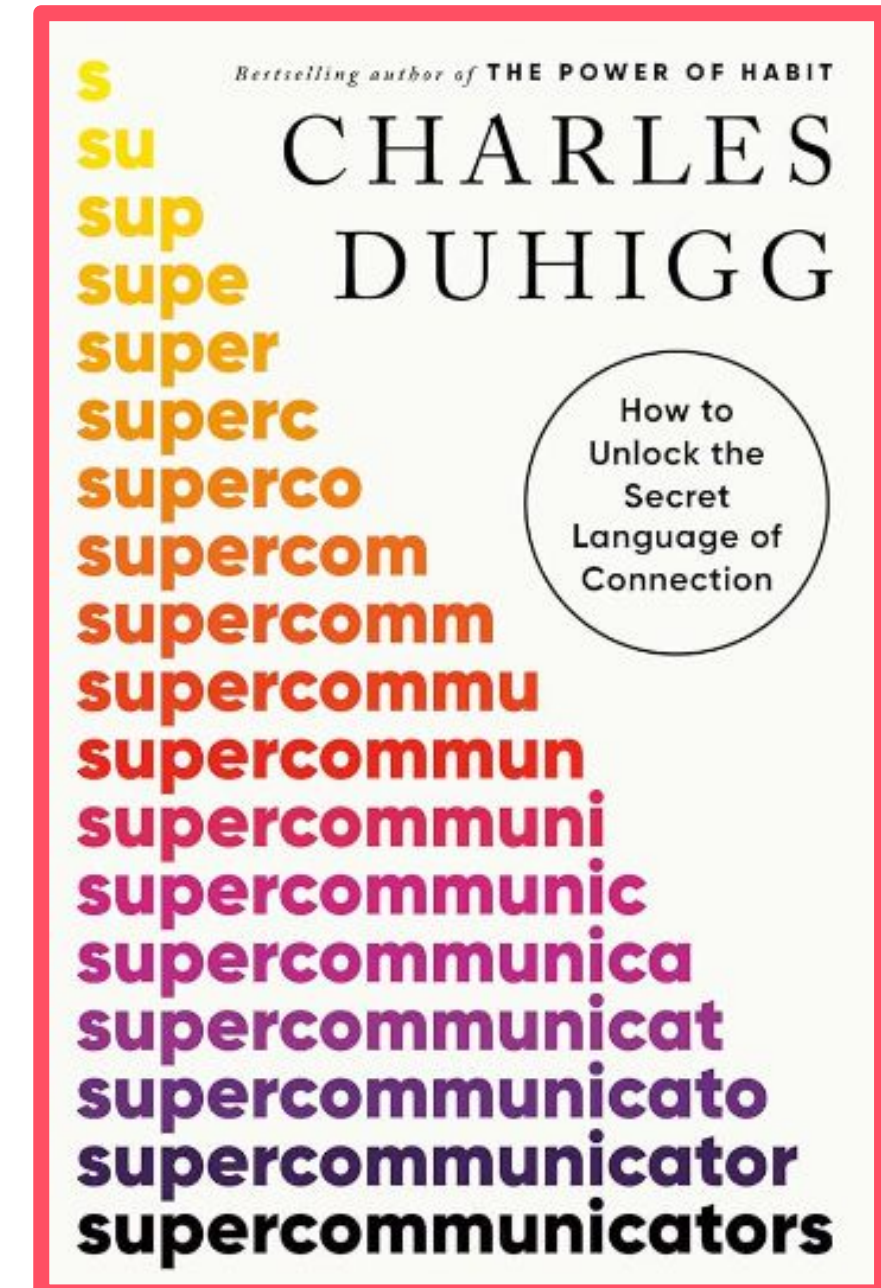
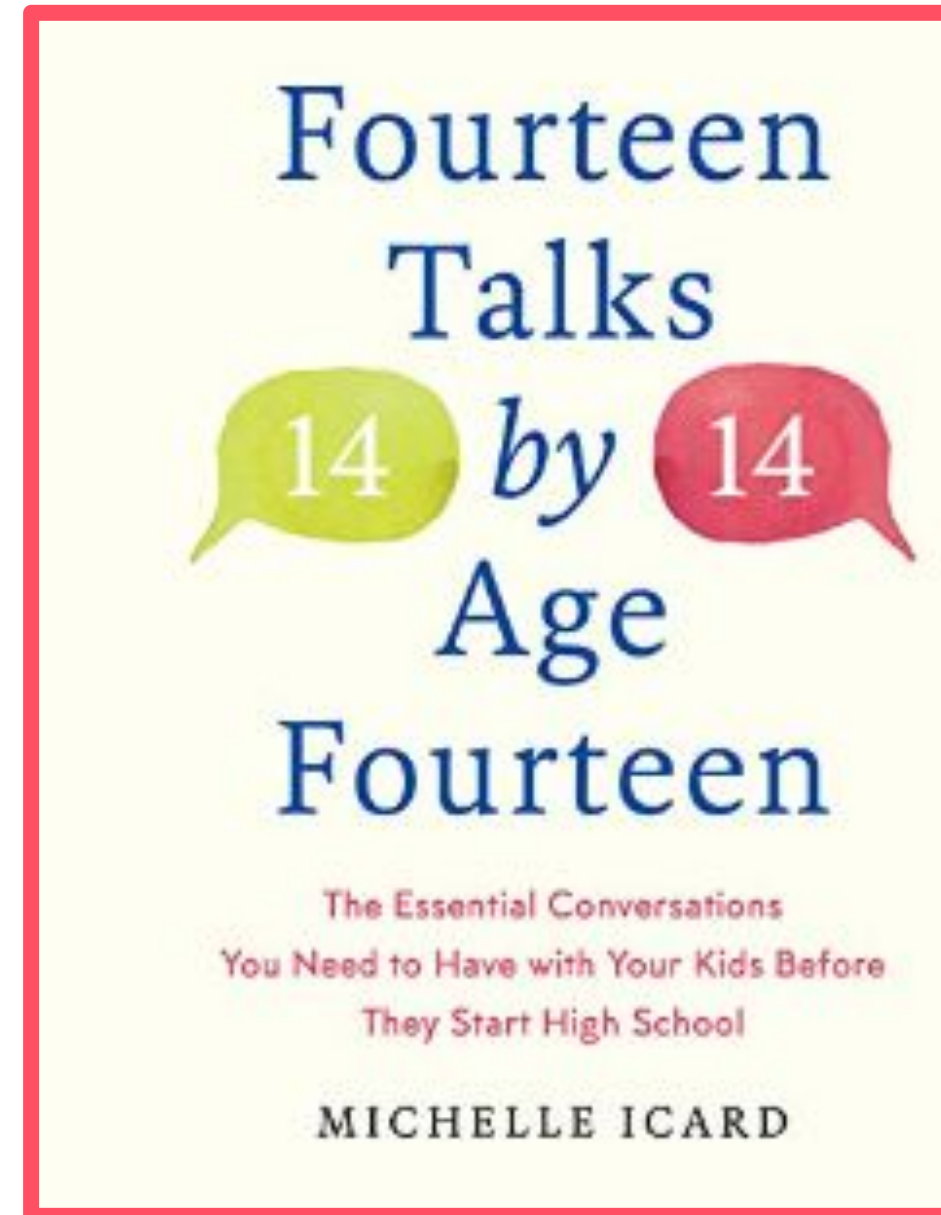
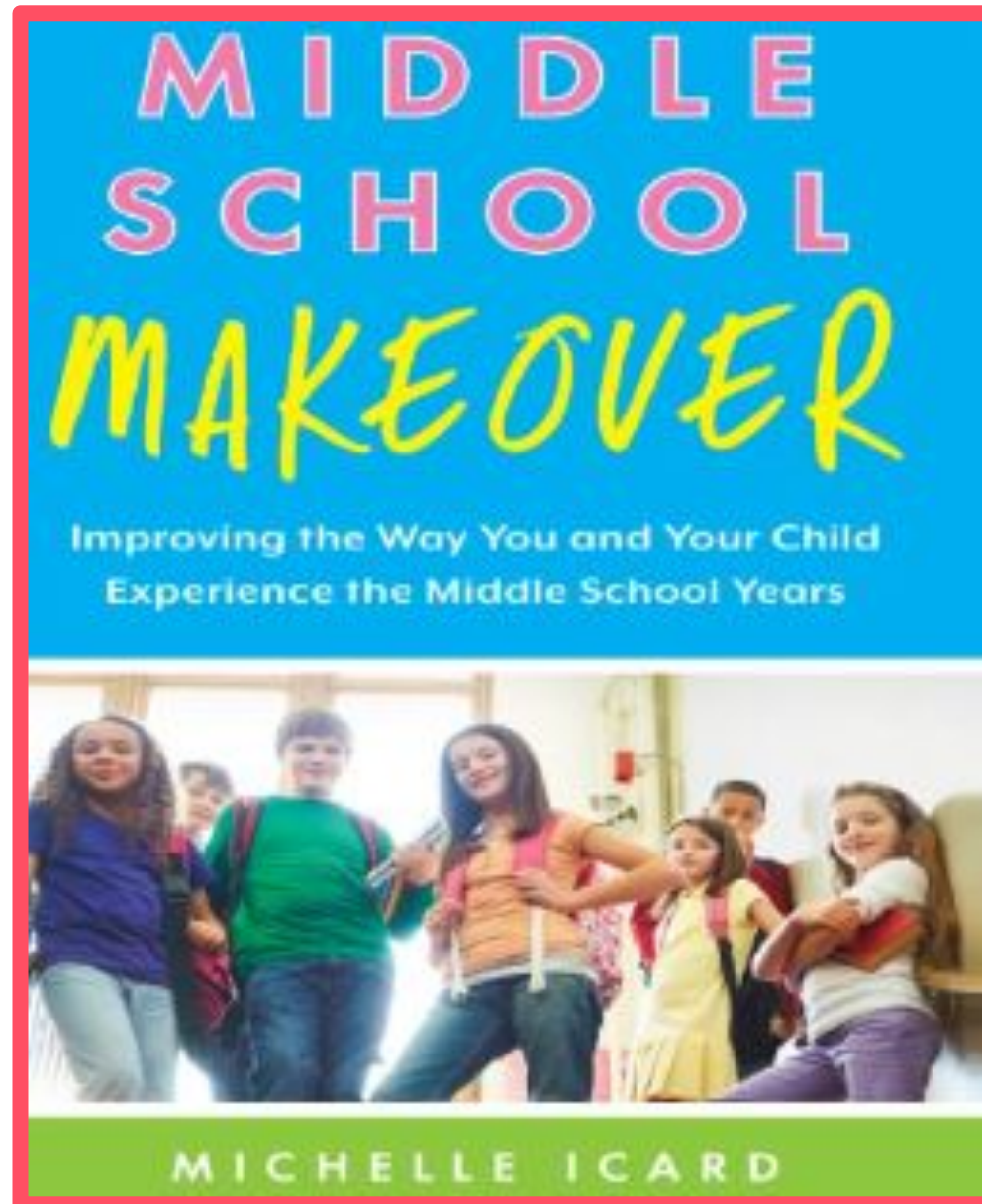
- They're supposed to be breaking away
- Be B.R.I.E.F.
- Be an assistant manager, not the boss
- Botox your brow and be distracted
- Avoid conversation crashers



**HUMANS ARE MORE  
COMPLICATED**



# References





# THANK YOU

## What's the Purpose of Your Face

- [cristin\\_nowak@isdschools.org](mailto:cristin_nowak@isdschools.org)
- 816-520-0880
- @cristinnowak
- Thank you for completing your session feedback survey in the Guidebook app!

