DRC Report | Parents Apart
3/28/18
 The Parents Apart program I observed was run by Paula and ran from 6-9. We started 10 minutes late as six people did not come. She supplied handouts and started to talk about the job of parenting. She explained that it is hard to be a parent and that you are always growing. She made the room feel safe and open. She then collected photos of the children to put up on the wall so they can be “present in the room” with us. Our first activity was to go into groups and find something in common. The participants were understandably chatty and interactive. The environment of the room was relaxed and easy going. Parents talked about their personal experiences and their situation. We then moved on to the slide show and followed along with the packets. Because it was evening and dark in the room, it lowered the energy of the class. We stopped on the temperament scale and had parents mark where their kids are on each section, then where they themselves were. This was a good activity to helps parents realize how similar they are to their kids. We then took a 15 minute break. After retuning, we went through the cycle of grief. I feel that the participants would have benefitted from sharing some personal experiences or specific examples on this slide. We then covered controllable factors which was clear, concise and beneficial. Paula covered a detailed chart for gains and losses. Lastly, they did an activity where they received a card with a sentence on it from a child in which they had to decipher the child’s emotion. I enjoyed this activity as I think it is a great way to teach mindfulness of emotions and teach platinum empathy. This form of empathy is not just imagining what they are feeling but instead learning how to decipher and ask so that your actions can be in alignment with how the other wants to be treated.
 *Feedback*
 I think this course could use additional education on the uses of empathy, restating and paraphrasing. These skills are great for kids as it teaches them feeling words and learning how to identify their own emotions. Restating allows for kids to say more when you are unsure what to say. For example, if your child says they are sad and you repeat, “you are sad?”, they then are likely to explain why without any further pushing. Additionally, paraphrasing allows kids to correct you if you are wrong as well as feel listened to by being validated with their emotions.
Paula was not extremely comfortable with the technology and could use some assistance. She had lecture style class which I think is good for Parents Apart, but not for MAAPs. This is because there is a slide show where parents are being educated while MAAPS seems to do well in a workshop type style. I suggested to parents at the end that using the feelings word sheet in the packet could be useful for their kids to make a chart of words that they know based on their cognitive level. Having a fun chart in the house can encourage kids to use feeling words to explore themselves over throwing tantrums or shutting down. This is something I utilized in a preschool setting and is was a big hit!

 **MAAP** The MAAPs program I observed was instructed by Marsha Koretzky from 6-9 pm. When you first walked in, Marsha had already prepared the board with an activity and a schedule for what they would cover that day. We started promptly. The activity was to write on a supplied index card about a time when you felt angry and to put detail into the sensation. I felt that this was a great way to warm up while waiting for the other attendees. After that, we went through attendance in which they introduced themselves and talked about why they were there. Five out of six people came, one being an hour late. We covered what is anger as well as the biology behind it. Marsha was considerate and careful with how she worded things to not offend or be misunderstood when discussing anger is in our nature, but is something to be controlled. She made sure they knew that anger is okay, if learned to manage it. While some participants felt they did not need to be there, they were on top of the activities and productive. Marsha used illustrations on the board to teach about the brain structures used with anger as well as the anger cycle. She gave useful skills for reducing anger such as breathing, walking, counting, mantras, worry rocks and to work out. She gave them goals for the following class as well as homework. They had to assess their anger-boiling point in the packet she gave them. They also had to choose a skill or mantra to help them that is specific to their personal experience.

 *Feedback*
 I felt that the class participants, while initially reluctant, got a lot out of this session. It was effective. They were happy to go home but also grateful for what they had learned already and thanked us individually. I feel that this session could benefit from U shaped seating as used in Socratic method learning over lecture style. This is used to make the participants feel more involved and are able to make eye contact with others who are speaking. The participants were interactive and enjoyed the activities. Marsha was personable, calm and used pictures and examples to get her point across. Additionally, I suggest adding learned behaviors to the curriculum as the participants were unaware of it and it coincides with the brain education. Many of the people there have had similar childhoods to what they were facing currently and acknowledging that these behaviors have been learned in order to cope with that stimuli makes it more accessible mentally to unlearn it.