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DON'T BE THE GIANT SQUID

Qianna's Corner: Don't Be the Giant Squid

Caring for young children is never a solo act.

It takes an entire village—and a deeply committed team—to show up every single day with patience, creativity, flexibility, and heart. Whether you're in a classroom, a center, a home-based program, or supporting the field from behind the scenes, none of us can do this work alone. We rely on one another to lift each other up, solve problems, share ideas, and sometimes simply survive the beautiful chaos that comes with caring for young children.

Recently, our Ohio AEYC staff decided to put teamwork to the test with a team-building adventure at an escape room. The theme? A stranded submarine.

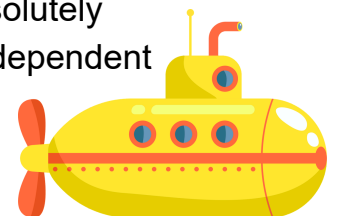
Now, let me be clear: this was a fake submarine.

At least I think it was.

Our mission was to solve a series of puzzles before time ran out and—according to the storyline—before a giant squid destroyed our submarine and sent us to a watery grave at the bottom of the ocean, all within 60 minutes.

No pressure. At first, it was complete chaos.

Everyone was searching different corners of the room, reading clues out loud at the same time, turning knobs, pulling levers, and confidently suggesting solutions that were absolutely incorrect. We weren't functioning as a team—we were functioning as several independent investigations happening simultaneously.



Meanwhile, somewhere outside our imaginary submarine, a giant squid was apparently preparing to make us its next meal.

If the submarine had been real, the squid would have won.

In fact, I am fairly certain we would have been halfway to the ocean floor before we figured out which puzzle we were supposed to be solving.

But then something changed.

We started listening to one another.

We shared information. We played to our strengths. We stopped trying to solve every puzzle individually and started solving them together.

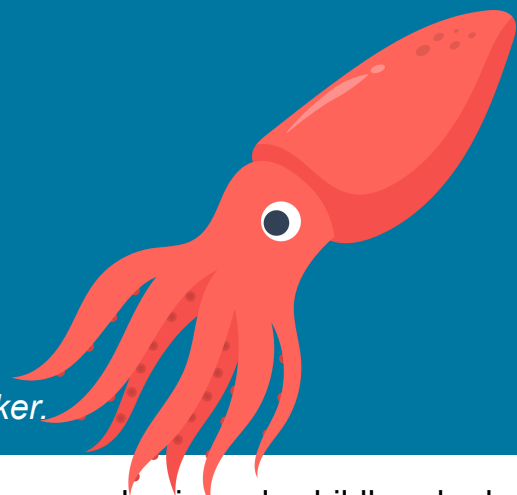
Suddenly, clues connected. Puzzles unlocked. Someone noticed a tiny detail everyone else had missed. Someone else kept the group focused when the clock started creating panic. Every person brought something important to the mission.

And together, we escaped.

The squid lost.

The submarine survived.

The team victoriously exited the room to cheers and a free sticker.



The experience stuck with me because it mirrors what happens every day in early childhood education. No single educator can do it all.

We need the teacher who notices the quiet child who needs encouragement. We need the colleague who steps in when someone needs support. We need the administrator advocating for staff and families. We need the family member who partners with us. We need the cook, the bus driver, the custodian, the coach, the advocate, and the volunteer.

Every role matters.

Every perspective matters.

Every person matters.

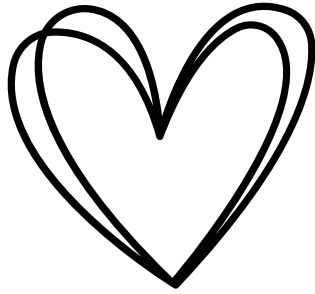
Just like in that submarine, success happens when people bring their unique strengths together toward a common goal.

In a world that sometimes feels filled with conflict, division, and people arguing over everything, let's continue building something different within our programs, organizations, and communities.

We need people.

We need community.

We need each other.



So here's my challenge for you this month:

Go thank a team member.

Seriously.

Walk right up to them and say, "Thanks for not letting the giant squid kill me."

Tell them specifically what they do that makes your work easier, your day brighter, or your program stronger.

Or, if you've read this far and are feeling adventurous, simply say: "Thanks for not letting the giant squid kill me." Then walk away. No explanation needed.

And while we're talking about giant squids, let's try not to be one for someone else.

Maybe there's a coworker testing your patience. Maybe someone is having a difficult day. Maybe there's a situation stretching your grace to its absolute limit.

Grace abounds.

Perhaps today is the day to extend a little more of it.

Or maybe it's the day to receive it.

Either way, we're all in this submarine together. Let's keep showing up for one another. Let's keep solving puzzles together.

Let's keep building the kind of teams that help children, families, and communities thrive.

The children in our care are counting on us.

Thank you for being part of this incredible village.

You matter more than you know.

With Love and Empowerment,

 *Qianna*

P.S. I would love to connect with you! Send me an email at qtidmore@oaeyc.org and tell me about a “giant squid” in your life!