



Chapter 2: Core Beliefs

CORE BELIEFS

Goals for the Four Core Beliefs

Participants Will:

- Identify ideas and areas of improvement for school and staff
- Generate ideas for the 4 Core Beliefs

Materials Needed:

- Paper and pencils for participants
- Chart stands with paper and markers
- Post-it notes
- Computer and projector

Handouts:

- Discussion questions
- Cornell Notes
- Reflection form

Background Information

This chapter emphasizes the importance of partnerships with families. Educators and parents have many beliefs, attitudes, and fears about each other that hinder them from coming together to promote children’s education.

Before you can create strong and effective partnerships with families, you have to believe not only that it’s important, but also that it can be done—and that you can do it.

From conversations with district leaders, principals, teachers and other school staff, there have been four core beliefs identified that serve as the foundation for engaging families.

Core Belief 1: All parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them.

Core Belief 2: All parents have the capacity to support their children’s learning.

Core Belief 3: Parents and school staff should be equal partners.

Core Belief 4: The responsibility for building partnerships between school and home rests primarily with school staff, especially school leaders.

It is critical that schools believe that families want to support their children and that they can make a significant difference in a child’s education. “When teachers reach out with the goal of building partnerships based on mutual respect and common purpose, families will respond.”



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Workshop Sequence

Welcome and Introductions

Have materials ready prior to participants' arrival and set up chart stands for table groups. Each table should also have paper, pencils, and Post-it notes on it.

Opening Activity

After welcoming participants, pass out the Cornell Notes handout and play Chapter 2 from *The Power of Partnerships* DVD.

Activity #1

At each table, discuss the following questions:

1. **Understanding that our parents have dreams for their children, how can we solicit that information?** (Small group discussion 5 min.) Share with total group.

Example:

Washington Elementary used fall conferences to gather and celebrate parent's dreams. Parents were asked to fill out a cloud-shaped card, describing their dreams for their children. A photo was then taken of each family. Later, photos were attached to each dream cloud, and they were displayed in the main hallway. Future conferences may be called "Dream Teaming."

2. **How can parents support their children as learners?** (Small group discussion 5 min.) Share with total group.

Example: Parents set aside time for everyone to read at home.

3. **What are three things we can do as a school to help boost parents' capacity to help their children be successful?** (Small group discussion 5 min.) Share with total group.

Example:

Promote meaningful conversations at home about what the child is learning at school. One technique is called "Ask Me." During the week, the class builds a list of ten things they have learned and want to share with their parents. This list is turned into a set of "Ask Me" questions that are sent home on Friday. For instance, "Ask me why the leaves are changing colors now."

4. **What is one thing I can do to help parents feel connected to my classroom or to the school?** (Small group discussion 5 min.) Share with total group.

Example:

As I talk with parents, I need to remember that we all want the best for their child.



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Optional Activity – Looking out the Window/Looking in the Mirror

Background – Rick Dufour, an educator and expert on professional development, created an activity with school staff where he asked them to come up with ideas to improve student achievement in their school. Through this activity two lists were created: one that identifies areas beyond the responsibility of the school (out the window), and another that displays what the school has the power to change (in the mirror).

Ask each table group to brainstorm about what they think would improve parent and family involvement at your school. Give everyone Post-it notes to record their ideas. After brainstorming, go over the list and put the Post-it notes in the appropriate column. One column, “Looking Out The Window,” shifts the responsibility to someone outside the school and the second column, “Looking In The Mirror,” lists ideas for which the school can take responsibility. (10 min.)

Groups should compare the two lists and discuss the contrast between the two columns. (10 min.)

As small teams wrap up their conversations, have each group select a spokesperson and report out on what the team discussed and discovered (10 min).

Below is an example:

| What would improve family involvement— looking out the window | What would improve family involvement— looking in the mirror |
|---|--|
| Families who speak English and understand the culture here in the United States | A more welcoming school building and front office |
| More respect for the value of education | Positive phone calls home at least once a month |
| Parents who are more motivated | Translation available in the office and for conferences and other contacts |
| More money to hire staff who can work with families | A family center stocked with learning materials that families can take home. |
| More parent Involvement programs run by the district | Workshops on reading and math |
| More discipline and better behavior in the home | More planning time to meet with families |

Beyond the Bake Sale, Henderson, Mapp, et al 2007, p.42

Conclusion and Reflection

Following the final activity, take five minutes to review the four Core Beliefs and collect the thoughts and ideas of participants by having them complete the reflection form.

Core Beliefs

Chapter Two

The Power of Partnerships

Core Belief #1

All parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them.

Start difficult conversations with, "I believe in you. Let's talk about your dreams for your child."

Core Belief #2

All parents have the capacity to support their children's learning.

"How do we help build parent's confidence in their ability to help their children learn at home?"

Core Belief #3

Parents and school staff should be equal partners.

Message to parents: "You are your child's first teacher. You have important information that will help me teach your child."

Core Belief #4

The responsibility for building partnerships between schools and home rests primarily with school staff and their school leaders.

What would your school look like if it was a genuine partnership school?



Core Belief Discussion Questions

At your table, discuss the following (5 min. per question):

1. Understanding that our parents have dreams for their children, how can we solicit that information?

Example: Washington Elementary used fall conferences to gather and celebrate parents' dreams. Parents were asked to fill out a small cloud-shaped card, describing their dreams for their children. A photo was then taken of each family. Later, photos were attached to each dream cloud, and they were displayed in the main hallway.

2. How can parents support their children as learners?


Example: Parents set aside time for everyone to read at home.

3. What are three things we can do as a school to help boost the capacity of parents to help their children be successful?

Example: Promote meaningful conversations at home about what the child is learning at school. One technique is called "Ask Me." During the week, the class builds a list of 10 things they have learned and want to share with their parents. This list is turned into a set of "Ask Me" questions that are sent home on Friday. For instance, "*Ask me why the leaves are changing colors now.*" This is much better than the usual, "What did you do at school today?" Response from student: "Nothing."

4. What is one thing I will do to help parents feel connected to my classroom or the school?

Example: As I talk with parents, I will remember that we both want the best for their child.



Reflections

How today met/did not meet my expectations:

How are we inviting our families to support their children?

How can we go the extra mile to make the difference in connecting with our families and community?

How can we better partner with our families?

What knowledge and skills do the parents in our school have that we can utilize?