



Chapter 3: The How

RELATIONSHIPS

“Parents tell us that feeling welcome and being treated with respect by school staff is the number one key to their connection with a school. When school staff construct caring and trustful relationships with parents, treating parents as partners in their children’s education, parents are far more likely to become involved—and stay involved.” (*Beyond the Bake Sale*, Henderson, Mapp, et al., 2007, p. 47)

Goals for Developing Relationships

Participants Will:

- Identify common practices of developing relationships
- Label each common practice (Welcoming, Honoring, Connecting & Ineffective)
- Recognize common practices that are effective/ineffective
- Develop new ways of developing relationships

Materials Needed:

- 4 chart boards or long butcher paper
- Karen Mapp DVD
- Computer and projector
- Pens, pencils and/or markers
- Post-it notes
- Kagan or other soft music to play during the seating of staff and brainstorming session

Handouts:

- Rate Our Service and Space survey
- Four Versions of a Family School Partnership
- Reflection Form

Background Information

Formed out of authentic invitations to be a partner with the school, teacher, and classroom, relationships are the backbone of successful family-school partnerships. This chapter intends to encourage school staff to create and nurture *trustful relationships* with parents. It will also assist staff in developing *two-way communication* with families.

Fear, isolation, and assumptions are a few of the potential barriers between families and the school that can be overcome by constructing meaningful relationships. In this chapter, three important elements of relationships will be emphasized: *welcoming, honoring, and connecting*.

Relationships are balanced, cooperative, and interdependent and occur in a context with the student at the center. Actions between homes and schools are flexible, responsive, and proactive, while differences in viewpoints and perspectives are seen as a strength, not a hindrance.

(*School and Families, Creating Essential Connections for Learning*, Sandra L. Christenson and Susan N. Sheridan, 2001.)



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Workshop Sequence

Welcome and Introductions

Have the following items set up prior to the presentation:

- Projector and computer ready to play *The Power of Partnerships* DVD
- Post-it notes and writing utensils on the work tables
- Four chart boards or four long sheets of butcher paper labeled as follows:

Welcoming	Honoring	Connecting	Other

Opening Activity

After welcoming all of the participants, play Chapter 3 from *The Power of Partnerships* DVD.

Brainstorming Activity

After viewing the video clip, ask each participant to quickly reflect on the school’s current relationship building practices with families. Next, have each person write an example of the school’s current practices on Post-it notes, as they relate to the Karen Mapp video clip and “*The Joining Process*.” (There is no limit to how many examples each person can write.) Allow 3-5 minutes for staff members to reflect and write. Ask each person to place their Post-it notes on the charts or butcher paper in the appropriate section, either under **Welcoming, Honoring, Connecting, or Other**.

Welcoming -- Families are made to feel at home, comfortable, and a part of the school community.

Honoring -- Family members are respected, validated, and affirmed for any type of involvement or contribution they make to the school.

Connecting -- School staff and families put children at the center and connect on educational issues of common interest designed to improve educational opportunities for the children.

Group Discussion Activity

When all Post-its are on the charts or butcher paper, you may choose to conduct a full group discussion or divide the room into table groups. Distribute handouts to all participants and direct them to the discussion questions page.

Discussion questions could include:

- Are the Post-its evenly distributed among the categories?
- What categories have the most and the least Post-its?
- What conclusions can we draw about the school’s current practices as they relate to *Welcoming, Honoring, and Connecting*?
- Which practices are ineffective or could use improvement?
- What steps can we take to ensure that the *Welcoming, Honoring, and Connecting* of families are fairly balanced and applied on a regular basis?
- What new ideas can you share in terms of developing *trustful relationships* with families?



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Optional Activity

Ask participants to break into small groups. Each group will tour the school, looking at things as a visitor coming to the school for the first time. Upon returning, groups will complete the survey and discuss their observations. Discussion questions could include:

- What are the strengths of our school?
- What areas need improvement?
- What steps can we take to make improvements in these areas?

Conclusion and Reflection

As participants wrap up their conversation from the activities, pass out reflection forms and ask staff to take four to five minutes to complete them. If time allows, summarize the three main components of the *Joining Process*, and ask staff to keep these concepts on their mind as they partner with parents.

Rate Our Service and Space

Please take a few minutes to respond to our survey. Your responses will help us in identifying and celebrating our strengths and in selecting areas that can be improved to make our school the best place for our community's children. To ensure your confidentiality, we ask that you not put your name or any personal information on the survey. Thank you!

	<i>With 4 being the highest, rate the following:</i>	4	3	2	1	0
1	Signs clearly identify and direct visitors through the school.					
2	There are spaces in the parking lot reserved for visitors/handicapped.					
3	The main entrance was easy to find (signs from visitor parking direct visitors to the Main Entrance).					
4	Entrance signs welcome visitors and give clear directions to the main office in multiple languages (if applicable).					
5	Office personnel are welcoming and helpful.					
6	Staff members are welcoming and helpful.					
7	Hallways, office, and classrooms are clean.					
8	Building feels safe and secure.					
9	Student work is displayed throughout the school.					
10	Building exterior is well maintained.					

Answer the following:

1. School's greatest strength:

2. The area most needing improvement:

The How - Reflection

3 things I learned:

-
-
-

2 comments I have:

-
-

1 new thing I want to do as a result of what I have learned:

-



4 Versions of Family-School Partnerships

Check the boxes that have the most statements under them marked or circled. Check only 1 box in each row

Partnership School	Open-Door School	Come-if-We-Call School	Fortress School
<p>All families & communities have something great to offer—we do whatever it takes to work closely together to make sure every single student succeeds.</p>	<p>Parents can be involved at our school in many ways—we're working hard to get an even bigger turnout for our activities. When we ask the community to help, people often respond.</p>	<p>Parents are welcome when we ask them, but there's only so much they can offer. The most important thing they can do is help their kids at home. We know where to get community help if we need it.</p>	<p>Parents belong at home, not at school. If students don't do well, it's because their families don't give them enough support. We're already doing all we can. Our school is an oasis in a troubled community. We want to keep it that way.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family center is always open, full of interesting materials to borrow Home visits are made to every new family Activities honor families' contributions Building is open to community use & social services are available to families 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers contact families once a year Parent coordinator is available if families have questions or need help Office staff are friendly Staff contact community agencies & organizations when help is needed 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better-educated parents are more involved "Many immigrant parents don't have time to come or contribute" Staff are very selective about who comes into the school 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families do not "bother" school staff "Minority families don't value education" Parents need security clearance to come in It is important to keep community influences out of the school
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All family activities connect to what students are learning Parents & teachers look at student work & test results together Community groups offer tutoring & homework programs at the school Students' work goes home every week, with a scoring guide 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers explain test scores if asked Folders of student work go home occasionally School holds curriculum nights 3 or 4 times a year Staff let families know about out-of-school classes in the community 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are told what students will be learning at the fall open house Parents can call the office to get teacher-recorded messages about homework Workshops are offered on parenting 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum & standards are considered too complex for parents to understand "If parents want more information, they can ask for it" "We're teachers, not social workers"
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translators are readily available Teachers use books & materials about families' cultures PTA/PTO includes all families Local groups help staff reach families 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office staff will find a translator if parents ask in advance Multicultural nights are held once a year "Minority" parents have their own group 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "We can't deal with 20 different languages" "Parents can bring a translator with them" "This school just isn't the same as it used to be" 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Those parents need to learn English" "We teach about our country—that's what those parents need to know" "This neighborhood is going downhill"
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a clear, open process for resolving problems Teachers contact families each month to discuss student progress Student-led parent-teacher conferences are held 3 times a year for 30 minutes 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal will meet with parents to discuss a problem Regular progress reports go to parents, but test data can be hard to understand Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School calls families when children have problems Families visit school on report card pick up day & can see a teacher if they call first 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents don't come to conferences Problems are dealt with by the professional staff Teachers don't feel safe with parents
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents & teachers research issues such as prejudice & tracking Parent group is focused on improving student achievement Families are involved in all major decisions Parents can use the school's phone, copier, fax, & computers Staff work with local organizers to improve the school & the neighborhood 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents can raise issues at PTA/PTO meetings or see the principal Parent group sets its own agenda & raises money for the school Resource center for low-income families is housed in a portable classroom next to the school PTA/PTO officers can use the school office A community representative sits on the school council 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal sets agenda for parent meetings PTA/PTO gets the school's message out "Parents are not experts in education" Community groups can address the school board if they have concerns 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal picks a small group of "cooperative parents" to help out Families are afraid to complain. "They might take it out on my kid" "Community groups should mind their own business; they don't know about education."