

SOME TIPS AND CONSIDERATIONS ON BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

At the start of the school year, the teachers in the study made time for establishing relationships. The goal is to ensure all students and families feel a sense of belonging that is characterized by trust, connection, and understanding

For students with learning or behavioral problems, cultivating positive relationships provided “protective effects” that helped them stay focused on learning.

This has also proven true with families. Having strong relationships is protective for learning and navigating student learning together.

THE 5:1 RATIO

- *5 positive Interactions to one corrective or instructional Interaction most Individuals do not recognize their interaction types until they start documenting this*
- *There are universal approaches that can reach many, but more selected and tailored approaches will be needed for Establishing and restoring some relationships*
- *Having a written strategy has been shown to increase the chances that you actually reach the families that might need the more selected strategies.*

MAKING IT BITE-SIZED

Many of us can't accurately remember the types of interactions we have. Tracking your interactions can make you much more aware of who you are interacting with and helps bring attention to the ways that are your interacting with your students and your families. However, don't get overwhelmed you can make this bite-sized.

- 1) Talk it through with a colleague or a friend
- 3) Track a few students/families a day
- 4) Ask teaching assistants or others to help monitor when starting
- 5) Have some specific ways that you want to connect and communicate early.
 - Noting something that their child did that was positive
 - Noting something you like about their child
 - Noting some way their conversation has helped you.
 - Learning about hobbies or interests of student and family
 - Learning about hopes and dreams
 - Understand what changes look like in their family during Covid? or during this time?
 - Appreciating a quality or skill the parent has
 - Noting how student is working towards hopes and dreams

- When in person- offering friendly gestures
- Positive greetings
- Understanding learning supports families are looking for

STRATEGIES FOR ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS

- Clear welcome and openness to two way communication
- Set expectations for school year together
- Ask questions
- One on one calls or video chat where the purpose is to get to know each other and learn about hobbies and interests. The goal is to invest in this when you both need to draw on this investment for a rainy day.
- Support student-led and family-led opportunities (student led progress reports- families like to hear from their own children)
- Provide opportunities for families to connect with each other
- Use open-ended questions and reflective listening and enthusiasm
- Offer genuine compliments and links to learning
- Let all families know that there are roles for each of the student's team members: teacher, family, etc.
- Find out other caring adults and family members that should be included

STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

- Relationships need care and maintenance or they will deteriorate over time
- What is using up the time and relationships you have banked
- Are you aware of your positive and corrective interactions?
- Are you checking back in on a regular basis
- 5 families a day with 5 positive contacts- text, call, email, facebook, etc
- Set expectations for school year together
- Ask questions
- One on one calls or video chat where the purpose is to get to know each other and learn about hobbies and interests. The goal is to invest in this when you both need to draw on this investment for a rainy day.
- Continue to acknowledge ways families are being supportive to their children.
- Acknowledge good behavior or aspects of their children.

REPAIRING HARM OR RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS

- Sometimes harm needs to be repaired because of something you did directly.
- Sometimes harm may need to be repaired because of a previous experience with teachers and the school. So you may see yourself establishing a relationship but families or students have to get over the negativity bias that is already wired in their brain because of consistently negative experiences.

- Conflict, misunderstandings, negative interactions can weaken a relationship and if left unaddressed can result in disengagement.
 - Families may need more attention to intentionally connect to school, student, and learning. Families may be able to contribute help with inspiration, contextualizing, chunking, chewing, or other ways. This will be discussed in linked to learning.
 - School staff can repair by talking with families and students and pressing the re-set button.
 - Take responsibility for actions. Or discuss “What could have been done to avoid the problem. Apologizing, when appropriate, can build trust and show willingness.
 - Show empathy and acknowledge that there are always different perspectives.
 - Prioritize listening and understanding. Then focus on solutions, not problems.
 - Separate the deed from the doer. It’s important to identify behaviors, not the person.
 - Consider if any of your words label the child or family.
 - Remember, student outcomes, are directly related to family partnership learning so relationships are time well-spent.
 - Families, all have strengths and knowledge they can bring to their student’s cultural, social, emotional, physical and academic development.
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- For more information look at Clay Cooke’s research and work on relationship building with students and families. Some additional ideas on E, M, R strategies <https://www.swsc.org/cms/lib/MN01000693/Centricity/Domain/124/Clay%20Cook%20-%20Creating%20nurturing%20and%20responsive%20environments%20handout.pdf>
 - Edutopia: <https://www.edutopia.org/article/key-effective-classroom-management#:~:text=When%20those%20relationships%20are%20damaged,boost%20their%20sense%20of%20belonging.>
 - Diana Browning Wright <http://www.pent.ca.gov/mt/emrpractices.pdf>
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