



BUILDING TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

Consider a trusting relationship in your life. What characteristics make it trusting? How did you and the other person build and sustain that trust?

You likely thought of traits like honesty, compassion, good listening, vulnerability, consistency, psychological safety, and transparency. Trust isn't given freely; it is cultivated and takes time to develop between two people. Likewise, family-school partnerships are built on a foundation of trust and mutual respect.

TRUST BETWEEN TEACHERS AND FAMILIES HELPS FAMILIES:

- Understand you care for their child as a whole person
- Share their hopes, dreams, and vision for their child's future with you
- Feel safe telling you about their worries or concerns
- Ask questions to understand grade level expectations and academic performance
- Support your classroom instruction by reinforcing learning at home
- Collaborate with you as partners to address and navigate challenges
- Advocate for you and become your ally

SO NOW WHAT? CONVERSATIONS

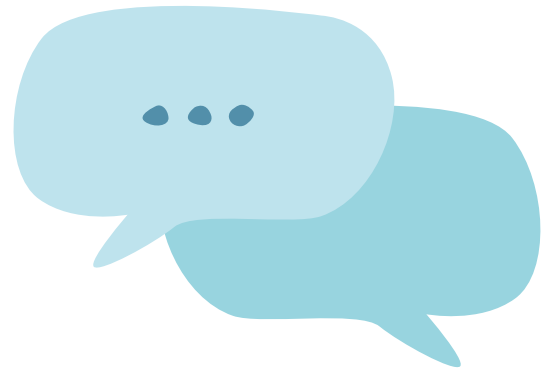
Relationship-building conversations are a great way to open up lines of communication and build trust with your students' families, especially at the start of the school year. These conversations differ from typical teacher-family communications because they allow you to **primarily listen**. By asking questions, you can better understand families' hopes, dreams, goals, and priorities for their child, as well as their recommendations on how to meet their child's needs.

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RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING VS. TYPICAL TEACHER- FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Building a relationship with families rooted in trust and caring strengthens your partnership! Start the school year by laying the foundation for a trusting relationship before communicating about academics, school policies, and other common topics.



In typical teacher-family communication you...	In a relationship-building conversation you...
Share your expertise in learning and pedagogy	Center the relationship between you, the student and family first
Explain grade level expectations for academic performance	Lead with love and care for the student and a desire for partnership with their family
Inform families about what their child is learning in class	Acknowledge that the family has just as much to contribute as you do
Share data on their child's performance	Ask questions to learn from families' expertise about their child. Talk less and listen more
Provide tools and resources to support learning at home	Focus on the positive, such as the student's strengths, talents and interests
Collaborate on solutions for attendance, grades, behavior, and school policies	Share a bit about yourself and find common ground with families. Let families get to know who you are too



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Reach out to your students' families and schedule time for a conversation focused solely on getting to know them and building a relationship. During the conversation ask a few questions from the list below to learn from their expertise on their child! There's also space to add your own questions.

- What are your hopes and dreams for your child?
- Who are the most important people in your child's life?
- What are your child's strengths, talents, and interests?
- What helps your child learn and feel comfortable?
- What's the most important thing you'd like me to know about your child or family?
- Are there any family or cultural traditions you'd like me to be aware of?
- What makes it hard for your child to learn? What signs indicate they are struggling?
- What should I know about your child's past experiences with school?
- What are your goals and priorities for your child this year?
- What can I do to make this a great school year for you and your child?
- What's the best way to communicate with you? How often would you like updates from me?

