

**Excerpts from Organizing Family and Community Connections With Schools:
How Do School Staff Build Meaningful Relationships With All Stakeholders?**

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Please see the full article for proper quotes, references, and details.

<http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/rb/rb4-Rel.pdf>

Research on school performance ...has resulted in a concise list of characteristics that are common to high-performing schools:

- 1. A shared understanding of goals and expectations for all involved in the school system,**
- 2. High academic standards clearly defining what students are to know and be able to do,**
- 3. A strong cadre of leaders providing support for the goals and expectations of the school and the school community,**
- 4. Procedures for purposeful collection and analysis of data on students, programs, and staff,**
- 5. Strong relationships with family and community partners.**

Unfortunately, schools and districts commonly expend most of their time and effort developing the first four qualities and neglect to build strong relationships with family and community.

If school leaders desire to actively engage families in purposeful actions to support student learning, they need to design an effort that will provide parents with the tools and strategies to do this as well as work with them to insure that they understand how to use these tools.

One of the first steps in this process is to develop purposeful relationships between family members and school staff. The key to using this often untapped resource is what Mapp (2003) calls the “joining process,” a systemic effort to meaningfully engage all stakeholders in a process characterized by common understandings and shared decision making.

Fostering a culture of social trust is important to building family and community involvement with schools (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Boethel, 2003). However, there is no single best method to create this culture.

The authors recommend that schools promote activities that foster relationships among all stakeholders.

This article goes on to explain the types of activities that are common to schools that have effective family and community connections with schools programs and explains the process that can be used to explore the perceptions of the school community on a given issue, garner support for future improvement efforts, and open the door for inviting family and community members to participate as partners in later efforts.

Most importantly, it will help to create a feeling that the school is welcoming!