Learning Forward

Teams and Trust
Session 2301

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# Attributes of Collegiality

*What does collegiality look and sound like?*

**Directions:** Walk and talk with a learning partner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Collaboration / Collegiality</td>
<td>Working together in collaborative teams, rather than working in isolation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Results-Oriented</td>
<td>Measuring our effectiveness based on the results we achieve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Visionary</td>
<td>Actions driven by a shared vision based on research of best practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Efficacious</td>
<td>Determined to work together to find solutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Common Mission</td>
<td>Believing that our mission is to ensure that all children learn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Common Beliefs / High Expectations</td>
<td>Believing that we have not fulfilled our fundamental purpose until all students have learned at high levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Collective Inquiry</td>
<td>Decisions are research based with collaborative teams of teachers seeking out best practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Communication</td>
<td>Communicating openly and honestly, even when we disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Trust</td>
<td>Contributing to a climate of trust and confidence by walking the talk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Shared Leadership</td>
<td>Leadership is viewed as including teachers and other staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10 Ways to Build Trust Within Your Community

One thing we know for sure – high levels of trust are necessary for high levels of performance! The research findings of Megan Tschannen-Moran clearly support this assertion. Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. **Make relationships a priority.** We are in the people business and relationships are everything. Treat them as such. Susan Scott reinforces this concept in her book, *Fierce Conversations* when she says, “The conversation is the relationship.”

2. **Show personal regard.** Invest time in personally knowing others … their hopes, fears, and dreams, what they care deeply about. It can be as simple as speaking to someone about her grandchildren, acknowledging the college from which someone has graduated, or asking about a sick child. It might also include knowing that I love chocolate, giving me a pat on the back for a job well done, asking my opinion about something important to the school, or dropping me a note of appreciation for being a masterful educator.

3. **Make daily deposits.** Relational trust is built on a day-to-day basis. It’s the small things that make a BIG difference. Find authentic ways to make deposits into my emotional bank account every day.

4. **Be a committed listener.** Offer full presence to others. Listen twice as much as you speak as suggested by the fact that we have two ears and one mouth. It is a gift that people are hungry for.

5. **Keep your promises.** When you say you will do something, do it without fail. This demonstrates your trustworthiness and integrity that opens the door for even greater trust in the relationship.

6. **Use reflective feedback.** The language we use is a signal of trust in the relationship. Choosing to offer feedback that is reflective in nature, delivers the message AND enhances the relationship. It clarifies, acknowledges the value potential, and promotes the thinking of the receiver as one considers additional possibilities and options for future action.

7. **Promote thinking rather than advice giving.** David Rock’s book, *Quiet Leadership* asserts that the best way to improve the performance of another is to improve his thinking. Asking reflective questions over telling mediates the thinking of the other person, creating new hardwiring that substitutes short-term solutions for long-term capacity building.

8. **Articulate expectations and standards.** Be clear about what you expect with regard to performance. What are the drop-dead essentials for working in your school or district? In what ways do you communicate these essentials to those who are most affected?

9. **Trust others.** As ironic as this may seem, increasing our own trust of others, can build trust. Presume positive intent by believing that they “can do!”

10. **Celebrate successes.** Say “thank you” on a regular basis to individuals as well as the collective group. We all “crave” recognition and want to know that we are doing something worthwhile and doing it well.
13 Behaviors of High Trust Leaders

The Speed of Trust, Stephen Covey, Jr.

1. Talk straight
2. Demonstrate respect
3. Create transparency
4. Right wrongs
5. Show loyalty
6. Deliver results
7. Get better
8. Confront reality
9. Clarify expectations
10. Practice accountability
11. Listen first
12. Keep commitments
13. Extend trust
The Trust on Our Team Survey

This survey is designed to collect information about the levels of trust on our learning team. For each of the descriptors below, please indicate (1) the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by circling one of the three letters on the left-hand side, and (2) the level of importance that you place on each indicator by circling one of the three numbers on the right-hand side.

D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree  1 = Very important, 2 = Somewhat important, 3 = Not important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My colleagues willingly share their materials, resources, and ideas with me.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel welcome in my colleagues’ classrooms before and after school.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel welcome in my colleagues’ classrooms during their instructional periods.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable with my colleagues in my room during my instructional periods.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that my colleagues have good intentions in their interactions with me.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that my colleagues have good intentions in their interactions with students.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know that I can count on my colleagues.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that my colleagues are honest.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not afraid to share student learning results with my colleagues.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that my colleagues are competent and capable teachers.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that I can learn from my colleagues.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that everyone on my team makes meaningful contributions to our work.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that everyone on my team is pulling in the same direction.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our team celebrates the personal and professional successes of individual members.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our team celebrates our collective accomplishments.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I look forward to the time that I spend with my colleagues.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final Thoughts:** On the back of this page, please describe the kind of support you think your team would need in order to improve the overall levels of trust between teachers.
### Faculty Survey

*Directions:* This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the quality of relationships in schools. Your answers are confidential. Please indicate the extent that you agree or disagree with each of the statements about your school, marking in the columns on the right, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (6) Strongly Agree, filling the bubbles completely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students in this school care about each other.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teachers in this school typically look out for each other.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The teachers in this school have faith in the integrity of the principal.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Even in difficult situations, teachers in this school can depend on each other.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The principal in this school typically acts in the best interests of the teachers.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teachers in this school can rely on the principal.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teachers in this school trust each other.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Teachers can count on parental support.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Teachers think that most of the parents do a good job.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Teachers in this school trust the principal.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Teachers in this school are open with each other.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Students in this school can be counted on to do their work.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The principal doesn't tell teachers what is really going on.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The principal of this school does not show concern for teachers.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Teachers in this school have faith in the integrity of their colleagues.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Teachers in this school trust the parents.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Teachers in this school are suspicious of each other.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Students here are secretive.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. When teachers in this school tell you something you can believe it.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teachers in this school do their jobs well.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Teachers here believe that students are competent learners.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. The teachers in this school are suspicious of most of the principal's actions.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Teachers in this school believe what parents tell them.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. The principal in this school is competent in doing his or her job.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Teachers in this school trust their students.</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Trust matters — for educators, parents, and students

By Valerie von Frank

"We inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere and notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted."
— Annette Baier, in Moral prejudices: Essays on ethics, p. 98.

An elementary school teacher spent most of her career focused on making science exciting and alive for students. Her peers recognized her expertise, teaming up so she taught all the science for that grade level. The teacher was asked to teach colleagues her strategies at the district and state levels. And then one day her new principal announced without discussion that students at that grade level would no longer share teachers but remain in one classroom throughout the day. This veteran teacher’s feelings can be summed up in one word: Betrayal.

Researcher Megan Tschannen-Moran, recounting the story, said the teacher never returned to her old zest for instruction, fulfilling her teaching duties but never going above and beyond again. The effects of broken trust can last for years, she said, sapping people’s energy and sense of self-efficacy. Conversely, building trust can have the opposite effect.

"Nontrust is debilitating," said Tschannen-Moran, the Wakefield distinguished associate professor in the College of William and Mary School of Education. "People are less willing to share ideas and their energy is devoted to hypervigilance. Communication shuts down. ... Trust supercedes even transformational leadership (practices) for making change in schools."

Trust between principal and teachers, administrators and school staffs, parents and staff, teachers and students, and among students is essential for schools to improve, researchers agree. Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider (2004) say that school staffs with relational trust are more likely to take risks and make changes that help raise student achievement.

Where there’s trust, researchers say, people are more likely to innovate because they feel less vulnerable and alone, they give leaders more latitude because they believe...
Continued from p. 1

in the leader’s intentions, and people are able to coalesce around action plans, leading to more progress in reform. They are more likely to collaborate.

“Feelings of friendship evolve and alter subsequent exchanges,” Bryk and Schneider stated (2004, p. 15). “Individuals begin to take on the perspectives and interests of others in their social network. A personal sense of social status and esteem — being a valued member of a social group — accrues to participants. Thus, social participation entails not only material benefits to individuals, but also important social-psychological rewards.”

Bryk and Schneider, in a study of Chicago schools, found that schools with strong levels of trust as they began change efforts had a one in two chance of successfully improving reading and math achievement, as opposed to a one in seven chance of making gains where trust was weak.

FIVE ELEMENTS OF TRUST

Tschannen-Moran reviewed research and literature in numerous fields searching for a common definition of trust. She said many took for granted that everyone knows what trust is, but without a definition, it is hard to have difficult conversations to begin to build greater trust. She defines the idea this way: Trust is an individual’s or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open. She says that faculty trust is collective and grows — a trusting faculty becomes jointly willing to be vulnerable and take risks, and trust between some groups is likely to spread.

Tschannen-Moran and Wayne Hoy defined the five elements on which people base their trust judgments this way (2003):

BENEVOLENCE: Confidence that one's well-being or something one cares about will be protected by the trusted party... the assurance that others will not exploit one's vulnerability or take advantage even when the opportunity is available.

The cost of the absence of benevolence is productivity, they say, because people spend their energy thinking about and planning for alternatives.

HONESTY: The trusted person’s character, integrity, and authenticity ... acceptance of responsibility for one’s actions and not distorting the truth in order to shift blame to another.

Any dishonesty breaches trust and breeds further distrust.

OPENNESS: The extent to which relevant information is shared ... openness signals reciprocal trust.

When leaders are not open, staff become suspicious and wonder what is being hidden and why. Rumors drive people’s actions in a negative way.

RELIABILITY: Consistency of behavior and knowing what to expect from others ... a sense of confidence that one’s needs will be met in positive ways.

Without a sense of a leader’s reliability, people spend their energy worrying about whether they will be supported and making mental provisions for not being so. Reliability often involves the skill of time management for leaders, Tschannen-Moran said.

COMPETENCY: The ability to perform as expected and according to standards appropriate to the task at hand.

Trust can be limited no matter how someone perceives the other’s benevolence, reliability, openness, and honesty if the other person does not have the requisite skill and knowledge, for example, as a teacher.

CULTIVATING TRUST

How much teachers trust their principal depends

Continued on p. 3
Leaders build trust, Tschannen-Moran said, by:

- Being reflective. Recognize that staff are watching and paying attention to the five facets of trust. Exemplify those facets. "The factors rise and fall together," she said. "You have to hit all five."

- Building relationships before buckling down to the tasks at hand. "Go slow to go fast," she said. "New leaders should be aware of the courtship period. When hypervigilance subsides, you can say, 'Let's talk about how to go forward.'"

- Being willing to trust teachers to make decisions, allowing them a voice in issues of consequence, not only in simple matters, such as what field trip to take. "To earn trust, you have to be willing to extend trust," she said.

- Providing opportunities for multiple interpersonal interactions to allow teachers to build relationships around meaningful work.

- Developing a vision of what trust looks like in practice. She said themes often involve respect, communication, and appreciation. "These are things people value deeply," she said.

- Listening. "Teachers who feel they are being listened to begin to shift the culture," she said. Listening must be authentic rather than cursory, and individuals must feel they have been heard.

Stephen Uebbing and Mike Ford (in press) say the school leader builds trust by promoting "a school culture that emphasizes cooperation and caring, rather than competition and favoritism."

Tschannen-Moran suggests that to examine trust, begin with a survey of how strong trust is in the school or organization, but only if leaders are ready for the answers — and to have a conversation about them. Leaders should be clear with those taking the survey how they plan to use the data and share the results. Then leaders can build on the positive, she emphasizes, rather than trying to close the gap between the ideal and reality, through a process of appreciative inquiry. "It helps to have a coach, a thinking partner to process the results and provide emotional support," she said. See principal survey on p. 5.

Tschannen-Moran has even more succinct advice for leaders to build trust: "Develop a thoughtful leadership style. Act with humility. Treat teachers like professionals."

REFERENCES


Gimbel, P.A. (2003). Solutions for promoting principal-

teacher trust. Lanham, MD: ScarecrowEducation.


Valerie von Frank (valerievonfrank@aol.com) is an education writer and editor of Learning Forward’s books.
Appreciative interviews
Adapted by Joellen Killion

Appreciative interviews will help you avoid trying to close the “trust gap” and instead focus on building on the positives. Use this tool to help you and your partners discover what has worked well in the past, affirm those successes, create positive self-images, and imagine future successes.

1. Conduct appreciative interviews as detailed here.
   • Form pairs.
   • One partner interviews the other and vice versa, using the following questions.
     o Describe a time when you felt you were at your prime as a ____________ (add role you want to focus on).
       Share as many details as possible. When did it occur? Who was involved? What were you doing? What were others doing?
     o What did you value most about that situation, the work involved, the community, and yourself? What were the contributing factors that made it successful for you?
     o Project yourself into the future; it is five years from now, the start of 20__-20__ school year. Describe what is happening for you related to _____________ (add area of concern). What do you want to be like as a ____________ (add role title) then? What do you see yourself doing? What do you envision you will accomplish? Who will be your colleagues/confidantes?

2. After the interviews, meet with another team and introduce your partner to that team.

3. Discuss patterns that occur across all four interview responses (your partner’s and yours and the other pair’s responses). Be ready to share the patterns with the larger group.

4. Share patterns that exist across the larger group.

Adapted from:
# Principal survey

**Directions:** This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the quality of relationships in schools. Your answers are confidential. Please indicate the extent that you agree or disagree with each of the statements about your school, marking in the columns on the right, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (6) Strongly Agree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teachers in this school are candid with me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can count on parents to support the school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students here really care about the school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have faith in the integrity of my teachers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Students in this school can be counted on to do their work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I believe in my teachers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Most students in this school are honest.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I question the competence of some of my teachers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I am often suspicious of teachers' motives in this school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Most students are able to do the required work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I trust the students in this school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. When teachers in this school tell you something, you can believe it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Even in difficult situations, I can depend on my teachers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Parents in this school have integrity.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Most parents openly share information with the school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My teachers typically look out for me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I trust the teachers in this school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Students in this school are reliable.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Most parents here have good parenting skills.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Directions for administering this and other trust surveys for faculty and students are provided on Megan Tschannen-Moran's website (http://wmpeople.wm.edu/site/page/mxtsch/researchtools). Detailed instructions for calculating a standardized score are also included so that schools can compare their results with other schools.
Considerations for team norms

**Directions:** As you begin working together, think about ground rules that might guide the way your team does business. Several categories are suggested here. Read each question and make suggestions in the column on the right, then discuss your ideas with your team members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSIDERATIONS</th>
<th>IDEAS FOR NORMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What procedures will govern meeting attendance?</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Consider:</strong></td>
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<td>• Will team members be dependable and committed for the entire year?</td>
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<td>• Will team members arrive on time and stay for the entire meeting?</td>
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<td>• Will they stay on task, avoid side conversations and interruptions, and</td>
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<td>focus on the task at hand?</td>
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| What procedures will govern teacher dialogue?                                 |                 |
| **Consider:**                                                                 |                 |
| • How will team members react to others' work and ideas?                     |                 |
| • Are out-of-the-box and off-the-wall ideas welcome?                         |                 |
| • Are differing opinions welcome?                                            |                 |
| • Will what members say be held in confidence?                               |                 |
| • How will the team encourage listening and discourage interrupting?         |                 |

| What rules will govern decision making?                                      |                 |
| **Consider:**                                                                 |                 |
| • Will the team reach decisions by consensus?                                |                 |
| • How will members deal with conflicts and differences of opinion?           |                 |

| What attitudes and behaviors do you expect from team members?                |                 |
| **Consider:**                                                                 |                 |
| • Are all team members expected to be prepared and to participate?           |                 |
| • Should they be “fully present,” both mentally and physically?              |                 |
| • Will they put away other work (grading papers, filling out reports, etc.)? |                 |
| • Should team members try to convey positive attitudes?                     |                 |
| • Will team members try to maintain a sense of humor?                        |                 |

| How often will your team evaluate its functioning, and what indicators will you evaluate? | |
| **Consider:**                                                                 |                 |
| • Are team members abiding by the team's agreed-upon norms?                  |                 |
| • What ground rules did you use well?                                        |                 |
| • What norms do you need to re-emphasize, add, or adjust?                   |                 |

Partner interviews

Conducting an interview with potential teacher partners, in addition to gathering information and educating teachers on the coaching philosophy, helps coaches build "one-to-one individual relationships with teachers" (Knight, 2007). According to Knight, fifteen-minute one-on-one interviews are more effective than two-hour group meetings, so always try to schedule individual meetings, preferably during teacher planning time.

Four starter questions that generate meaningful conversations
1. What are the rewards you experience as a teacher?
2. What are your professional goals and what obstacles interfere with your ability to achieve your professional goals?
3. What are your students’ strengths and weaknesses?
4. What kinds of professional learning are most/least effective for you?

Questions about teachers’ current realities
• Describe a typical day on the job.
• What do you really like about your job?
• What kinds of pressures are you facing?
• What challenges are you facing?
• What kinds of changes are you experiencing?

Questions about students’ current realities
• Tell me about your students.
• What are the major needs of your students?
• What would most help your students?
• What outcomes are you striving for with your students?
• How many students are you teaching each day?
• How many students with various disabilities do you teach?
• What could have a significant influence on the happiness and success of your students?

Questions about the school’s current reality
• Describe the relationship between special education teachers and general education teachers in your school.
• Describe the relationship between senior high school teachers and junior high school teachers in this district.

Questions about changes being experienced
• How has your job changed over the past five years?
• How has your philosophy changed over the past five years?

Questions about instructional practices
• Are you teaching (name of intervention) at this point?
• If yes, which (intervention) are you teaching?
• What modifications, if any, have you made in your teaching of (intervention)?

Questions about a desired future
• What changes in your school would have the greatest influence on your students’ success?
• Describe the ideal school.
• What would you like to change about your job?

Questions about professional development
• Talk about the kinds of professional development you’ve experienced in the past few years.
• What have you liked about your professional development?
• What have you not liked about your professional development?

REFERENCE
Knight, J. (2007, March). Conversations can kick off the coaching. Teachers Teaching Teachers, 2(6), 1-4.
Why Professional Development Matters

By Hayes Mizell

Writtten for parents, community members, and policy makers by Learning Forward’s senior distinguished fellow, this booklet explains in fundamental terms what professional development is and why it is an important school improvement strategy.

This series of Q-and-A’s is useful for helping audiences outside of education to understand this critical topic. Download the publication to share at board meetings or community gatherings. Share copies with local, state, and federal policy makers in your advocacy work.

Key topics include:

• The basics.
• Ensuring quality learning.
• How schools and districts make it happen.
• The difference professional development makes.

Download Why Professional Development Matters as a free PDF at www.learningforward.org/advancing/whypdmatters.cfm.

Purchase printed copies through www.learningforwardstore.org. Bulk discounts are available.
TRUST factors

DIRECTIONS: The characteristics below help to increase trust among team members. Build a picture of the trust level in your team by placing marks on the chart (p. 8) at the appropriate level for each trust factor. Consider your team members as a whole when indicating the level of trust.

- **Care:** We care about each other professionally and personally, and we are willing to go the extra mile for one another. We show sensitivity to one another’s needs, desires, and interests.

- **Collaboration:** We limit our competitive tendencies to lower the barriers between us. We share power and control during the course of our work rather than hoarding it.

- **Competence:** We believe in each other’s ability and willingness to fulfill our responsibilities effectively. We believe that everyone on our team has skills and is capable of contributing.

- **Confidence:** We have confidence in one another, and we lean on one another. We believe we will all fulfill our obligations and do the right thing for the right reasons.

- **Consistency:** We behave in consistent and predictable ways. Our words match our subsequent actions, and we honor our team commitments. We do what we say we will do.

- **Integrity:** We trust each other to put the interests of students first and to make changes to meet their needs. We are clear about the intentions and motives for others’ actions.

- **Openness:** We communicate accurately, openly, and transparently. We lay our cards on the table respectfully, and others accept who we are and what we think.

- **Conviviality:** Our team meeting atmosphere is relaxed and enjoyable. People can be direct in their communications.

- **Respect:** We acknowledge one another’s ideas and interact in courteous ways. We genuinely listen to one another and treat each other with dignity.

- **Self-acceptance:** We are comfortable with ourselves. We accept ourselves and our potential.

- **Support:** We verbally and publicly support each other.

- **Familiarity:** We get to know each other. We know each other’s interests, contributions, abilities. We are aware and accepting of team members’ assets and shortcomings.

From the book
This is just one of dozens of tools from *Team to Teach: A facilitator’s guide to professional learning teams* by Anne Jolly. Published by NSDC, this step-by-step book includes the guidelines and tools learning team leaders need to build a successful professional learning team.

Order through the NSDC bookstore at www.nsdcstore.org or call 800-727-7288.
Item #8394, member price: $40.00, nonmember price: $50.00.

National Staff Development Council • 800-727-7288 • www.nsd.org

OCTOBER 2009
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Causes of Resistance in Schools

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<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>Possible Causes of Resistance</th>
<th>Strategies to Handle or Transform</th>
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<td>Notes</td>
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Resistance to Change: Reasons and Strategies
Ann Kilcher and Lawrence Ryan

1. **People don't know what to do (lack of knowledge)**
   - Share information with everyone involved.
   - Provide reading and set up study groups.
   - Conduct knowledge-building seminars.
   - Hold question and answer sessions.
   - Share inside knowledge and reach outward for expertise.

2. **People don't know how to do it (lack of skills/abilities)**
   - Provide high quality up-front training.
   - Provide on-going skill-building training sessions.
   - Provide opportunities for feedback and coaching.
   - Sponsor problem-solving groups.
   - Encourage visitations to other classrooms and schools so people can see the innovation in action.

3. **People don't know why (the purpose)**
   - Explain the rationale.
   - Talk about where it has made a difference--cite examples from practice and research.
   - Explain where it fits in the bigger picture.
   - Articulate anticipated outcomes.

4. **People are not involved in decision-making.**
   - Provide opportunities for involvement in decisions; learn a variety of decision-making strategies (consultation, majority rules, consensus).
   - Share the leadership among faculty members.
   - Involve staff in the generation of ideas before making decisions.
   - Establish a collaborative decision making model that spells out who makes what decisions and how decisions will be made.

5. **People are satisfied with the way things are.**
   - Create an alternative future picture (build creative tension.)
   - Clarify and raise your expectations (walk your talk.)
   - Take a hard, honest look at the data (results.)
   - Share success stories.
   - Reward change and risk taking.

6. **Workload and work pressure**
   - Get focused on common goals.
   - Periodically conduct a school review - make decisions around what you should "continue," "stop," "start" doing.
   - Reorganize human resources. (Align work with people in an equitable way.)
   - Promote more teamwork and a collaborative work culture.
   - Support individuals under pressure.
7. **People can't see the benefits of changing.**
   - Do a cost benefit analysis of the change.
   - Conduct a S.W.O.T. (Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.)
   - Be up-front about the disadvantages.
   - Provide real-life stories and examples where benefits have been achieved.
   - Identify strategies to counteract costs.
   - Collect data and monitor implementation.

8. **People don't see the change agent or advocate as credible.**
   - Match the innovation with knowledgeable and motivated change agents.
   - Involve people who are respected by their colleagues.
   - Choose people who have a track record to manage and facilitate change projects.
   - Give change agents hard feedback.
   - Ensure change agents receive high quality training on the innovation and the change process.

9. **People don't experience support.**
   - Conduct a human-resources needs assessment.
   - Develop an implementation plan that builds in human and material resources.
   - Provide recognition and rewards.
   - Address the time issue and make changes.
   - Provide incentives for change.
   - Monitor implementation.

10. **The innovation conflicts with the school culture.**
    - Talk about the innovation or change - establish how to gradually introduce changes.
    - Talk about the school culture - how it can support the change. Ask, "How will current beliefs, expectations, or behavior patterns block the change?"
    - Identify forces for and against change in the school.
    - Conduct a problem-solving group on implementation of the change.
    - Involve key cultural players" in the initiation and implementation process."

11. **People are worried about failure.**
    - Promote a risk-taking mindset - use it as a guiding principle.
    - Help people accept and understand that with change comes increased anxiety - it's okay and it's natural.
    - Conduct "anticipation meetings." Talk about the implications or consequences of failing; identify false assumptions and unfounded fears.
    - Allow people an opportunity to express fears - let them talk it out. Ask, "What is the worst-case scenario? What is the best-case scenario?"

12. **People have a negative experience with change.**
    - Encourage people to talk about what happened in the past.
    - Ask people to identify how this change is similar and how the change is different from others in the past.
    - Find out what will build their trust--act on their wants and needs.
    - Build their confidence that this will turn out differently.
    - Build in monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure feedback.
    - Discuss "What will happen if we don't implement the change?"
Coaching a Resistant Teacher: Questions for the Coach

When I label a teacher as “resistant,” how does that influence my ability to understand her reality – the struggles she’s facing, the issues competing for her attention, and her hopes and aspirations? If I conclude that she is not open to new ideas or changes, how does it prevent me from making connections with her?

Tips for Coaches

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Look in the Mirror</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♦ What emotions surface when I think about this person?</td>
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<td>♦ How does my body language mirror those emotions?</td>
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<td>♦ How can I resist the tendency to label the teacher and instead be open to hearing her story?</td>
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<th>Take an Inquiry Stance</th>
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<tr>
<td>♦ How can I replace judgment with curiosity and answers with questions?</td>
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<td>♦ How can I listen with commitment to understand the teacher better?</td>
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<td>♦ What might be the source of her resistance?</td>
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<td>♦ What experiences has she had that might have influenced her stance?</td>
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<td>♦ How connected does she feel to the school community and its leaders?</td>
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<td>♦ How safe does she feel to discuss her practices and points of view?</td>
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<th>Invite Your Client’s Story</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♦ How can I invite her to share her story with me – as an educator and as a person?</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ How might hearing her story help me to understand her better and foster relational trust?</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ How can I offer her the gift of committed listening?</td>
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<th>Don't Take It Personally</th>
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<tr>
<td>♦ How can I depersonalize behaviors that I might perceive as resistant?</td>
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<td>♦ What do I notice about my responses and how they could become obstacles to relational trust with my client?</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ How can I resist the tendency to react and instead focus on the bigger picture?</td>
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<td>♦ How can I demonstrate empathy, compassion, and genuine curiosity about the source of her resistance?</td>
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<th>Don't Overemphasize Technical Issues</th>
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<td>♦ What data (body language, words, feedback from colleagues) might I rely on to inform me about the best approach to take with this client?</td>
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<td>♦ When might I better serve my client by taking a relational approach rather than a technical approach to the work we might do together?</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ How can I demonstrate both humility and confidence to see past the resistance to the person in front of me?</td>
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Adapted from a blog “How Can I Coach a Resistant Teacher?” by Elana Aguilar, April 29, 2013
WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Jon Saphier

Let's get specific about how leaders can build trust

School leadership literature repeatedly identifies trust as essential for creating high-gain schools — schools where student gain scores are more than one year’s worth of achievement at a given grade level. These are schools that get results beyond what their demographics would have predicted (e.g. Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010).

When educators trust their leaders and each other, academic achievement rises.

Not coincidentally, students also develop trust and a sense of safety in the school community (LaCorte, York, Welner, Valladares, & Kelley, 2017).

Trust, however, doesn’t develop on its own. Leaders must engage in practices that build it. But what school leaders do to build trust has been something of a mystery.

Two decades ago, Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam (1998) wrote about what they called the "black box" of teaching practices in their work on the need for formative assessment. Their point was to reveal the hidden details of what made formative assessment effective. A similar black box obscures the relationship among trust, adult professional culture, and high-quality teaching and learning that we need to open.

We need to understand what relational trust looks and sounds like when it exists and what effective leaders do to create it.

TRUST IS THE FOUNDATION

Trust gives school leaders the respect and credibility they need for educators to listen to, collaborate with, and follow them. School leaders do not have the range of authority of industry CEOs. CEOs can declare new operating routines and schedules, quickly hire and fire, offer incentives, and give promotions and raises. Principals are also not at the head of a pyramid where supervisors oversee small teams that are easily managed.

Instead, principals are in charge of teachers who mostly work individually and often see themselves as artistic, solo practitioners rather than working side-by-side in teams and being members of an organization. It is no wonder that success as a principal hinges on the ability to unite and focus rather than command and control.

When leaders build trust among their faculty, this trust enables them to advance among faculty members key beliefs that motivate and justify the role of professional learning in schools (Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower 2018). Three such key beliefs are:

1. Smart is something you can get. The growth mindset is powerful. We can accelerate the learning of students who are behind. It’s my job to get students to believe this and act from that belief. I can learn the tools to do so.

2. The knowledge and skills base for high-experience teaching is very large. No matter how experienced or competent I am, I haven’t been prepared in significant parts of it. And some items in this knowledge base are more important than others.

3. I can learn more and get better. (I can. I must.)

The first belief gives us a sense of urgency and obligation to reach all students, not just some. The second and third beliefs create a craving to learn more and a rationale for collaboration because of the feeling of "I can’t do all this learning alone."

These beliefs generate the drive, humility, confidence, and moral obligation to engage in all the practices we already know successful faculties do. That includes but is not limited to frequent formative assessments, excellent use of data, reteaching to students who don’t get it the first time around, deep collaboration, a rigorous curriculum, and the relentless pursuit of learning for all students.

Staff members won’t be willing to
do all these things unless they trust that they should, that they can, and that they can get results. They also need to believe it will be safe to learn these practices and make mistakes along the way.

TRUST THAT ... WHAT?
One of the things missing from the trust literature is this: Educators succeed when they trust that ... what?
My colleagues and I at Research for Better Teaching often conduct an exercise with school leaders in which we ask them to fill in that sentence. Working in groups, they list what they expect a trusted leader to show. The following list is summarized from the literature (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Covey, 2006; Saphier, 2018) and is our recommendation for a comprehensive, operational definition of the layers of trust. Educators who do the exercise mentioned above will usually come up with many of these same items.

1. I trust that you are competent and can keep the wheels turning by:
   • Staying on top of essential operations.
   • Handling crises.

2. I trust that you think I am a worthwhile person because you:
   • Consistently notice and comment on the things I am doing well.
   • Are interested in my life outside of school.

3. I trust that you will make it safe for us to make mistakes by:
   • Making yourself vulnerable.
   • Acknowledging what you don’t know and where you need help.
   • Righting wrongs, apologizing, making restitution.
   • Acknowledging mistakes.

4. I trust that you will be honest, meaning you:
   • Give me honest feedback about my performance.
   • Talk straight, let people know where you stand, use simple language, call things as they are, and not leave false impressions.
   • Create transparency, err on the side of disclosure.
   • Confront reality, take issues head on, lead courageously in conversations.
   • Clarify expectations, discuss, validate, don’t assume they are clear, renegotiate if necessary.

5. I trust your integrity — that is, that your motives are for the interest of the children, not your own career advancement because you:
   • Stand up for important values.
   • Keep your moral compass.
   • Maintain urgency for what needs to be done.
   • Keep your promises and follow-through on your commitments.

6. I trust that you will act courageously by:
   • Protecting us from initiative overload.
   • Keeping us safe from toxic behavior internally.

7. I trust that you make legitimate decisions because you:
   • Solicit input.
   • Explain how our input was used and why.
   • Can set limits and say no.
   • Make decisions for the good of the school.

8. I trust that you will deliver results:
   • By highlighting small victories.
   • By getting the right things done.

9. I trust you will show me respect by:
   • Listening first and not assuming you know what matters most to others.
   • Using active listening skills.
   • Hearing out different points of view.
   • Valuing my time.
   • Having my back.
   • Sharing difficult information because you think I can get better and deserve the chance.

10. I trust that you will act in a caring and compassionate way by:
    • Showing kindness in little things.
    • Being generous.
    • Going the extra mile to show consideration to individuals beyond formal requirements.

WHAT DOES TRUST LOOK AND SOUND LIKE?
The list above is, by nature, a set of abstractions. We also conduct an exercise that brings those into concrete focus and thus brings them alive.

We ask participants to take one of these bullet points and write a vignette about something they would see, hear, or experience that would serve as evidence that a leader is embodying that
element of trust.

These vignettes can become a playbook for any leader who wants to build trust and respect. By that, I mean that the vignettes are imaginary actions or interactions that can then be made real, not imaginary.

Leaders can track their progress in building trust by turning the “trust that ... what” list into a rating instrument (e.g., with a scale from 1 to 5 for each statement) and giving staff the opportunity to complete it anonymously.

It’s important to explain to them that your ability to build trust is a key variable in generating the kind of adult professional culture that leads to better student results. In the spirit of transparency and trust building, it is also important to share the results with the faculty, perhaps in a histogram format.

When you present to faculty, describe what was surprising, what was pleasing, and what goals you are going to set as a result. Thank them for being honest and pledge to improve where it is needed. By doing that, you have modeled making yourself vulnerable and the first step in being strong (Saphier, n.d.).

All over the country, we see leadership academies and certification programs forming. Most every major city has one for growing its next generation of leaders. What is absent from these programs, however, is a serious study of how leaders make every school a reliable engine for constant improvement of teaching and learning.

That is what will move our public schools forward. To accomplish that, leaders need skills at building strong adult professional culture. We have known for decades what the attributes of strong adult cultures are (see sidebar above). But we have not identified the practices of leaders who were successful in building those strong cultures.

The visible practices of strong culture are the end products. They liberate staff members to collaborate deeply and improve their teaching. But the work to grow these practices is grounded in trust. A leader’s ability to build trust is the necessary catalyst for growing that culture. Let’s select people who want to do that and give them skills to be successful.

REFERENCES


Jon Saphier (saphier@rbteach.com) is founder and president of Research for Better Teaching.
Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for School Reform

Anthony S. Bryk and Barbara Schneider

March 2003 | Volume 60 | Number 6

Creating Caring Schools Pages 40-45

A longitudinal study of 400 Chicago elementary schools shows the central role of relational trust in building effective education communities. Important consequences play out in the day-to-day social exchanges within a school community. Recent research shows that social trust among teachers, parents, and school leaders improves much of the routine work of schools and is a key resource for reform.

For example, Comer's School Development Project demonstrates that strengthening the connections between urban school professionals and parents of low socioeconomic status can improve their children’s academic achievement (Comer, Haynes, Joyner, & Ben-Avie, 1996). Meier (1995) argues persuasively that building trust among teachers, school leaders, students, and parents was a key component of the success of the middle school that she created in Harlem. The efforts of Alvarado and his colleagues to build learning communities in Community School District 2 in Manhattan also support the importance of the social dimension of school change (Malloy, 1998). And a longitudinal analysis of successfully restructuring schools concluded that human resources—such as openness to improvement, trust and respect, teachers having knowledge and skills, supportive leadership, and socialization—are more critical to the development of professional community than structural conditions. . . . The need to improve the culture, climate, and interpersonal relationships in schools has received too little attention. (Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1994, p. 8; see also Louis & Kruse, 1995; Newmann & Associates, 1996)

In short, a growing body of case studies and clinical narratives directs our attention to the engaging but elusive idea of social trust as essential for meaningful school improvement. But what is social trust? What factors help to shape it? And what benefits does it produce?

To answer these and related questions, we conducted almost a decade of intensive case study research and longitudinal statistical analyses from more than 400 Chicago elementary schools. We spent approximately four years in 12 different school communities observing school meetings and events; conducting interviews and focus groups with principals, teachers, parents, and community leaders; observing classroom instruction; and talking to teachers about the progress and problems in their reform efforts. Differences between two of these cases, Holiday and Ridgeway Elementary Schools, help illustrate how the dynamics of relational trust across a school community influence its reform efforts.

Combined with this field study, we analyzed periodic surveys of teachers, principals, and students collected by the Consortium on Chicago School Research to examine the changing quality of relational dynamics in all Chicago elementary schools over a six-year period. We also analyzed trends in individual student reading and mathematics achievement during this same time period to assess the value that each school was adding to student learning and the extent to which this “value-added” measure was improving over time. This improvement in a school’s contribution to student learning is a direct measure of its changing academic
productivity. By linking evidence on the schools’ changing academic productivity with survey results on school trust over a long period of time, we were able to document the powerful influence that such trust plays as a resource for reform.

What Is Relational Trust?

Distinct role relationships characterize the social exchanges of schoolings: teachers with students, teachers with other teachers, teachers with parents, and all groups with the school principal. Each party in a relationship maintains an understanding of his or her role’s obligations and holds some expectations about the obligations of the other parties. For a school community to work well, it must achieve agreement in each role relationship in terms of the understandings held about these personal obligations and expectations of others. An interrelated set of mutual dependencies are embedded within the social exchanges in any school community. Regardless of how much formal power any given role has in a school community, all participants remain dependent on others to achieve desired outcomes and feel empowered by their efforts.

The principal, for example, needs faculty support to maintain a cohesive professional community that productively engages parents and students. Teachers’ work, in turn, depends on decisions that the principal makes about the allocation of resources to their classrooms. Parents depend on both teachers and the principal to create an environment that keeps their children safe and helps them learn. Such dependencies create a sense of mutual vulnerability for all individuals involved. Consequently, deliberate action taken by any party to reduce this sense of vulnerability in others—to make them feel safe and secure—builds trust across the community. As individuals interact with one another around the work of schooling, they are constantly discerning the intentions embedded in the actions of others. They consider how others’ efforts advance their own interests or impinge on their own self-esteem. They ask whether others’ behavior reflects appropriately on their moral obligations to educate children well. These discernments take into account the history of previous interactions. In the absence of prior contact, participants may rely on the general reputation of the other and also on commonalities of race, gender, age, religion, or upbringing. These discernments tend to organize around four specific considerations: respect, personal regard, competence in core role responsibilities, and personal integrity.

Respect

Relational trust is grounded in the social respect that comes from the kinds of social discourse that take place across the school community. Respectful exchanges are marked by genuinely listening to what each person has to say and by taking these views into account in subsequent actions. Even when people disagree, individuals can still feel valued if others respect their opinions.

Without interpersonal respect, social exchanges may cease. People typically avoid demeaning situations if they can. When they don’t have this option, sustained conflict may erupt. Such a situation existed at Ridgeway Elementary School, where interactions among parent leaders and professional staff got in the way of needed reforms. For example, parent and community leaders pressed school staff to implement a “respect program toward students,” which included written standards for how adults should talk to students, guidelines to encourage increased sensitivity on the part of school professionals to the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of
students, and procedures for handling student misconduct that refrained from punitive and demeaning adult behavior. But little of this same respect was evident in the social interactions among the adults. Parent and community leaders offered rude personal criticism of school staff with little recognition that their behavior was the exact opposite of the behavior that they desired to foster in the students.

**Personal Regard**

Personal regard represents another important criterion in determining how individuals discern trust. Such regard springs from the willingness of participants to extend themselves beyond the formal requirements of a job definition or a union contract. The actions of the principal at another of our case study sites, Holiday Elementary School, offer strong testimony. Almost every parent and teacher we spoke with at this school commented effusively about the principal’s personal style, his openness to others, and his willingness to reach out to parents, teachers, and students. His efforts helped cultivate a climate in which such regard became the norm across the school community. This climate, in turn, was a major factor in the high level of relational trust found in this most unexpected place—a 100 percent low-income, African American population in a school serving a public housing project, with a white, male principal.

**Competence in Core Role Responsibilities**

School community members also want their interactions with others to produce desired outcomes. This attainment depends, in large measure, on others’ role competence. For example, parents depend on the professional ethics and skills of school staff for their children’s welfare and learning. Teachers want supportive work conditions for their practice, which depends on the capacity of the school principal to fairly, effectively, and efficiently manage basic school operations. School administrators value good community relations, but achieving this objective requires concerted effort from all school staff. Instances of negligence or incompetence, if allowed to persist, undermine trust. This was a major factor in the negative parent-school relations at Ridgeway, where some clearly incompetent and uncaring teachers were nonetheless allowed to continue to practice.

**Personal Integrity**

Perceptions about personal integrity also shape individuals’ discernment that trust exists. The first question that we ask is whether we can trust others to keep their word. Integrity also demands that a moral-ethical perspective guides one’s work. Although conflicts frequently arise among competing individual interests within a school community, a commitment to the education and welfare of children must remain the primary concern. The principal’s actions at Ridgeway offer a compelling example of how a perceived lack of commitment to students’ welfare can undermine trust. Although members of the school community viewed this principal as a caring person, no one was sure where he stood on a number of internal school conflicts. When concerns surfaced about problematic teachers, he chose an approach sensitive to the particular adults involved. He visited their classrooms and demonstrated lessons, hoping that the teachers would adopt new techniques. When the teachers did not improve, however, he dropped the initiative and did not change the situation. In the end, no one
interpreted his action as directed toward the best interests of the students, and these events further exacerbated the distrust across the school community.

**Benefits of Trust**

The myriad social exchanges that make up daily life in a school community fuse into distinct social patterns that can generate organization-wide resources. Collective decision making with broad teacher buy-in, a crucial ingredient for reform, occurs more readily in schools with strong relational trust. In contrast, the absence of trust, as witnessed at Ridgeway School, provoked sustained controversy around resolving even such relatively simple problems as the arrangements for a kindergarten graduation ceremony.

Strong relational trust also makes it more likely that reform initiatives will diffuse broadly across the school because trust reduces the sense of risk associated with change. When school professionals trust one another and sense support from parents, they feel safe to experiment with new practices. Similarly, relational trust fosters the necessary social exchanges among school professionals as they learn from one another. Talking honestly with colleagues about what’s working and what’s not means exposing your own ignorance and making yourself vulnerable. Without trust, genuine conversations of this sort remain unlikely.

Further, relational trust supports a moral imperative to take on the difficult work of school improvement. Most teachers work hard at their teaching. When implementing “reform,” they must assume risks, deal with organizational conflict, attempt new practices, and take on extra work, such as engaging with colleagues in planning, implementing, and evaluating improvement initiatives. Teachers quite reasonably ask, “Why should we do this?” A context characterized by high relational trust provides an answer: In the end, reform is the right thing to do.

Our analysis of Holiday School provides strong testimony here, too. Both professionals and parents at Holiday shared a commitment “to go the extra mile for the children.” Almost every person we interviewed spoke about the school community in these terms. Our longitudinal survey analyses provide strong evidence on this point as well. In schools in which relational trust was improving over time, teachers increasingly characterized their colleagues as committed and loyal to the school and more eager to engage in new practices that might help students learn better.

Not surprisingly, then, we found that elementary schools with high relational trust were much more likely to demonstrate marked improvements in student learning. Our overall measure of school trust, on the basis of approximately two dozen survey items addressing teachers’ attitudes toward their colleagues, principals, and parents, proved a powerful discriminator between improving and nonimproving schools. A school with a low score on relational trust at the end of our study had only a one-in-seven chance of demonstrating improved academic productivity. In contrast, half of the schools that scored high on relational trust were in the improved group. On average, these improving schools recorded increases in student learning of 8 percent in reading and 20 percent in mathematics in a five-year period. The schools in the nonimproving group lost ground in reading and stayed about the same in mathematics. Most significant was the finding that schools with chronically weak trust
reports throughout the period of the study had virtually no chance of improving in either reading or mathematics.

**Conditions That Foster Relational Trust**

Relational trust entails much more than just making school staff feel good about their work environment and colleagues. A school cannot achieve relational trust simply through some workshop, retreat, or form of sensitivity training, although all of these activities can help. Rather, schools build relational trust in day-to-day social exchanges.

Through their words and actions, school participants show their sense of their obligations toward others, and others discern these intentions. Trust grows through exchanges in which actions validate these expectations. Even simple interactions, if successful, can enhance collective capacities for more complex subsequent actions. In this respect, increasing trust and deepening organizational change support each other.

**Centrality of Principal Leadership**

Principals’ actions play a key role in developing and sustaining relational trust. Principals establish both respect and personal regard when they acknowledge the vulnerabilities of others, actively listen to their concerns, and eschew arbitrary actions. Effective principals couple these behaviors with a compelling school vision and behavior that clearly seeks to advance the vision. This consistency between words and actions affirms their personal integrity. Then, if the principal competently manages basic day-to-day school affairs, an overall ethos conducive to the formation of trust will emerge.

In a troubled school community, attaining relational trust may require the principal to jump-start change. Typically, the principal may need to reshape the composition of the school staff by hiring strong people into staff vacancies and, where necessary, counseling out those whose practice remains inconsistent with the school’s mission and values.

The principal at Holiday, for example, skillfully used his expanded authority under Chicago’s school reform to hire new teachers of his own choosing without regard to seniority or bumping rights. This reshaping of his faculty was a key element in building relational trust. In contrast, the inability of Ridgeway’s principal to remove a few problematic teachers undermined trust. Although other teachers were reluctant to directly confront their offending colleagues, the faculty generally did not participate in collaborative activities. Similarly, parents and community leaders became more distrustful because they could not understand how the professional staff could tolerate such behavior. The end result was a school community that was unlikely to garner the adult effort required to initiate and sustain reform.

**Supporting Teachers to Reach Out to Parents**

Parents in most urban school communities remain highly dependent on the good intentions of teachers. To promote relational trust, teachers need to recognize these parents’ vulnerabilities and reach out actively to
moderate them. Unfortunately, many schools do not acknowledge this responsibility as a crucial aspect of teachers’ roles.

Elementary school teachers spend most of their time engaged with students. Little in their professional training prepares them for working with parents and other adults in the community. Moreover, because of the class and race differences between school professionals and parents in most urban areas, conditions can be ripe for misunderstanding and distrust. Effective urban schools need teachers who not only know their students well but also have an empathetic understanding of their parents’ situations and the interpersonal skills needed to engage adults effectively.

Other Key Factors

A number of structural conditions facilitate the creation of relational trust in a school community. Although their existence does not ensure relational trust, the presence of these conditions makes it easier for school leaders to build and sustain trust.

Small school size. We found that relational trust is more likely to flourish in small elementary schools with 350 or fewer students. Larger schools tend to have more limited face-to-face interactions and more bureaucratic relations across the organization. Individuals often define their affiliations in terms of some subgroup and have weaker ties to the larger organization. In contrast, the work structures of a small school are less complex and its social networks are typically fewer in number. As a result, relational trust is likely to be sustained more easily.

A stable school community. The stability of the student body directly affects teacher-parent trust. Building and maintaining trust depends on repeated social exchanges. Teachers find it hard to develop and sustain direct positive engagement with all parents when the student population changes frequently. Moreover, in transient neighborhoods, parents find it difficult to share reassuring information with one another about their good experiences with teachers; lacking such personal communication, parents who are new to a school community may fall back on predispositions to distrust, especially if many of their social encounters outside of the school tend to reinforce this worldview.

Voluntary association. Relational trust is also more likely to arise in schools where at least a modicum of choice exists for both staff and students. Because participants have deliberately chosen to affiliate with the school, relations among all parties are pre-conditioned toward trust. If subsequent actions reinforce the wisdom of this choice, relational trust will deepen. In contrast, the forced assignment of individuals to schools fosters uncertainty and suspicion about the motivations and commitments of others and may create a formidable barrier to promoting trust.

Keeping the Connective Tissue Healthy

Good schools depend heavily on cooperative endeavors. Relational trust is the connective tissue that binds individuals together to advance the education and welfare of students. Improving schools requires us to think harder about how best to organize the work of adults and students so that this connective tissue remains healthy and strong.
References

Endnote
1 School names are pseudonyms.

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