



In her research on how and why parents are involved in their children's education, Karen Mapp asked parents to identify what school staff actually did that created trusting and respectful relationships.

Mapp found that high-performing, low-income schools **welcome**, **honor**, and **connect** families with what's happening in class. She calls this "The Joining Process" and found that it creates a school where "everyone feels like members of a family."

Parents respond by becoming loyal members of the school community and taking part eagerly in their children's education. Here are some specific practices that parents said made them feel a real part of the school:

#### **Welcoming: Develops Relationships**

- Put out the welcome mat (reserved parking spots, welcome signs, directions)
- Enroll the whole family – tours of the school, home visits, and a buddy system
- Create a warm, friendly building with lots of student work on display
- Make sure people are accessible, such as open office hours for the principal
- Set customer service standards for office staff and others
- Put on the personal touch – small meetings, one-to-one talks, a family center

#### **Honoring: Deepens Relationships**

- Show respect at all times. Ask parents for their advice -- and take it
- Give parents a voice in major decisions about their children and the school
- Recognize families' contributions and thank them for their help
- Respect families' circumstances – offer translators, convenient times, childcare
- Set ground rules together – such as procedure for classroom observations
- Accentuate the positive – apply no negative labels to anyone

#### **Connecting: Links Families to Student Learning and Sustains Relationships**

- Link parent activities to what students are learning and doing in class
- Exhibit student work and send graded work home every week
- Make home visits to find out child's talents and interests, explain what's going on in class, and leave learning materials families can use with children
- Show parents how much staff care by keeping parents informed about what their kids are learning and doing in class
- Invite parents to observe in class and learn how teachers teach
- Open a Family Center – create a warm place to gather and lend learning materials and games

# Developing Relationships with Families

## WELCOMING, HONORING, CONNECTING

<b>INSTEAD OF THIS</b>	<b>TRY THIS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ “Who are you? What do you want?”</li><li>▪ “No Trespassing” signs</li><li>▪ Parent meetings dominated by the principal, school staff or a few PTA/PTO officers</li><li>▪ Calling home only when a child acts out or is in danger of failing</li><li>▪ Complaining about parents who don’t help their kids with homework</li><li>▪ Leaving parent involvement to the Assistant Principal or Teacher’s Aide</li><li>▪ Meeting only during school hours or only on one set time and day</li><li>▪ Announcing a new reading program</li><li>▪ Planning events, then publicizing them to parents</li><li>▪ Talking at and about parents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ “Hello! Welcome to our school. How may I help you?”</li><li>▪ “Welcome” signs</li><li>▪ Parent meetings broken into small discussion groups where everyone participates, each group picking a leader.</li><li>▪ Staying in personal touch with each family at least once a month</li><li>▪ Sending home learning kits and interactive homework assignments and/or developing programs to show parents how to help with homework</li><li>▪ Meeting and greeting parents before and after school, and going to community events</li><li>▪ Rotating parent meetings before school, evenings, and weekends and at different times</li><li>▪ Involving families in selecting a new reading program</li><li>▪ Surveying parents to get their ideas and opinions for family activities</li><li>▪ Listening to and with parents</li></ul>