Tools
FOR SCHOOLS

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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

Tools for trust
The strategies on pp. 4-7 will help schools assess and build one-on-one and team relationships over time.

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

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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.

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> Schools' most complex problems are best solved by educators collaborating and learning together.

"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

To read more about trust, see:
- "Developing relational trust in schools through a consensus process," by Michael K. Redburn, in *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation.* Available at http://cnx.org/content/m19511/latest.
- *Solutions for promoting principal-teacher trust,* by Phyllis A. Gimbel, ScarecrowEducation, 2003.
- *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement,* by Anthony S. Bryk and Barbara L. Schneider, Russell Sage Foundation Publications, 2004.
- *Trust matters: Leadership for successful schools,* by Megan Tschannen-Moran, Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Continued from p. 2

on the principal's behavior, according to Phyllis Gimbel (2003).

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."

"Trust is the lubrication that makes it possible for organizations to work. Trust is the glue that maintains organizational integrity."
— Warren Bennis & Burt Nanus, in *Strategies for Taking Charge,* p. 41

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Hoy, W.K. & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2003). The conceptualization and measurement of faculty trust in schools. In W. Hoy & C. Miskel (Eds.), *Studies in leading and organizing schools* (pp. 181-208). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

Uebbing, S. & Ford, M. (in press). *The life cycle of leadership.* Oxford, OH: NSDC.

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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:
  Lord, J.G. (2005). *Appreciative inquiry and the quest: A new theory and methodology of human development.* Available at www.appreciative-inquiry.org.
  Cooperrider, D.L., Whitney, D., & Stavros, J.M. (2008). *Appreciative inquiry handbook: For leaders of change.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

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.

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

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.

CONSIDERATIONS	IDEAS FOR NORMS
What procedures will govern meeting attendance? *Consider:* • Will team members be dependable and committed for the entire year? • Will team members arrive on time and stay for the entire meeting? • Will they stay on task, avoid side conversations and interruptions, and focus on the task at hand?	
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?	

Source: Jolly, A. (2008). *Team to teach: A facilitator's guide to professional learning teams.* Oxford, OH: NSDC.

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?

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Why Professional Development Matters

By Hayes Mizell

Written 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.
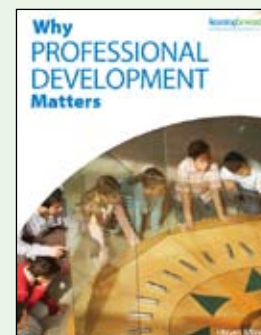
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