

The 7th Annual Family Engagement
Leadership Summit

welcome!

we will begin
shortly...

**Ohio Statewide
Family Engagement Center**

For Every Child, Every Family, Every School

ANNUAL FAMILY ENGAGEMENT LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Strengthening Trust in Schools through Family Partnerships

Promising Partnership Practices

Emily Markovich Morris, PhD and Richaa Hoysala
September 2026



Hello!



Emily Markovich Morris, PhD
Fellow



Richaa Hoysala
Research Associate

The Brookings Institution

- A **research and public policy** think tank in Washington, DC
- Equips **decision-makers** with nonpartisan **research** and **policy strategies**.



Center for Universal Education

What we do: advance research, develop practical tools, and create spaces and mechanisms for sustained dialogue, transformative learning, and cohesive action

Why we do it: Ensure all learners develop a breadth of skills to thrive in a rapidly changing world

Slido:

Thinking back to your experience in middle school, to what extent did you **trust your teachers**?

At present, putting yourself in the shoes of the **families** at your school, to what extent do you think they trust schools and teachers?

What level of **professional development or training** have you received on building trusting relationships?

Learn

The elements of trust
and why it matters

Reflect & Discuss

What trust look like in
our communities

Strategize

Share strategies we are
using to (re)build trust
in our communities

PART ONE

Why Trust Matter in Schools



How is trust impacting our schools? (In the headlines)

- **Environment and natural disasters:** “Teaching among the ashes: ‘It’s not just your house that burned, it’s everyone’s’” (Hechinger Report)
- **Transparency and school decision making:** “Florida’s Parent Plus Portal will lead to more trust in K-12 education” (Tampa Bay Times)
- **Policies:** “‘Trust is broken’: Parent reacts to possible immigration arrest near DC school” (NBC)
- **School safety:** “The foundations for school safety: Building trust through relationships” (MN Dept of Public Health)
- **AI and cell phones:** “Parents losing trust in AI as schools ramp up usage” (The Hill); “‘Will you trust us?’: JPS plan for stricter cell phone policy makes some parents anxious” (Mississippi Today)

“Public Trust in Elementary School Teachers Declines—But Still Tops Most Other Professions” (Ed Week, January 2025)

“Elementary school teachers second only to nurses in a poll of most-trusted professions.”
Public trust is in decline in schools, but so is the case in other public sectors and professions.

From Gallup Poll Data on Public Trust from Dec. 2024

“Seven out of 10 teachers believe the public holds a negative view of their profession.”

EdWeek Research Center's State of Teaching survey, 2024

“Respondents who are parents may rate their own children's teacher more highly...parents consistently rate their own local school system more favorably than public schools in general.”

Separate annual poll conducted by Gallup and PDK International

Examples of Conversations in SW Pennsylvania

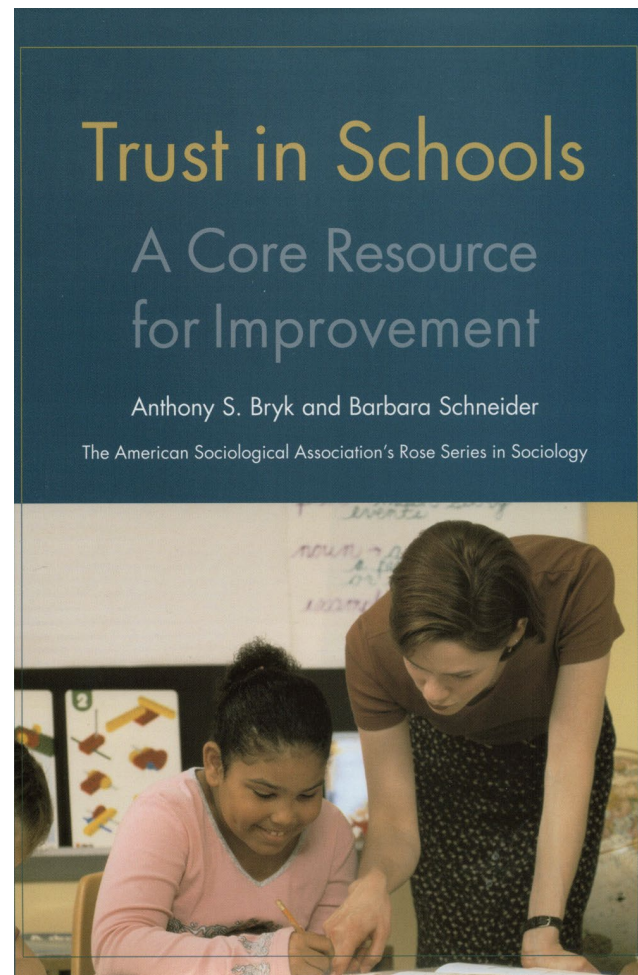
“Family, school, and community relationships are built at the **speed of trust.**”

Dr. Thomas Washington, Crawford Central School District, PA

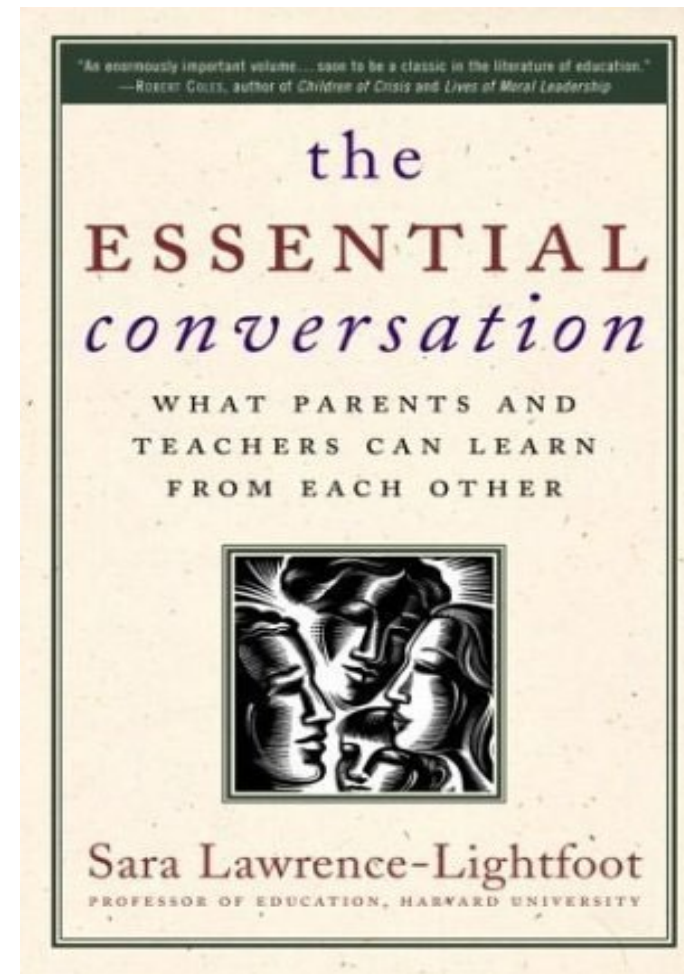
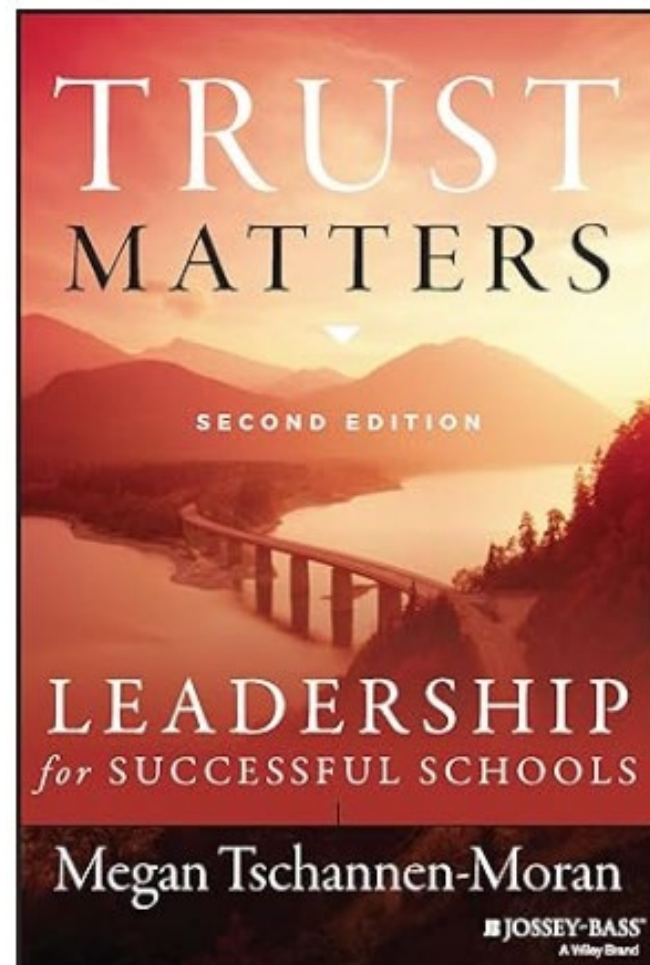
“Depending on circumstances, trust can either be **too easy to gain or impossible.** Without it, relationships can't move forward. In a school setting with students, adults need to be able to recognize the situations and build trust. This is often overlooked in terms of teacher professional development”

Dr. Jason Hall, New Brighton Area School District, PA

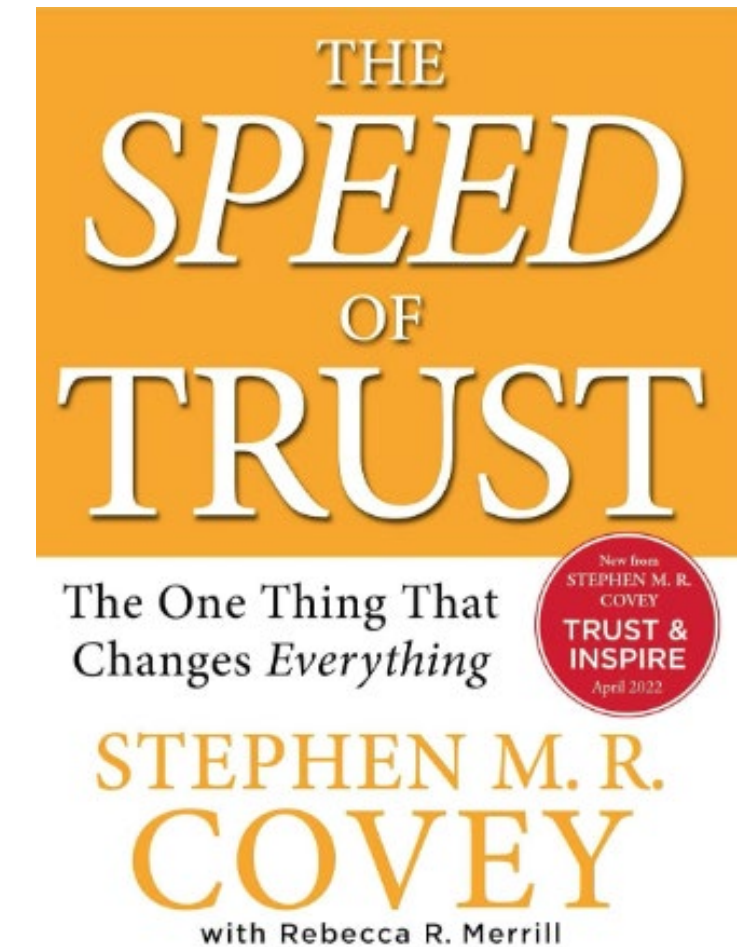
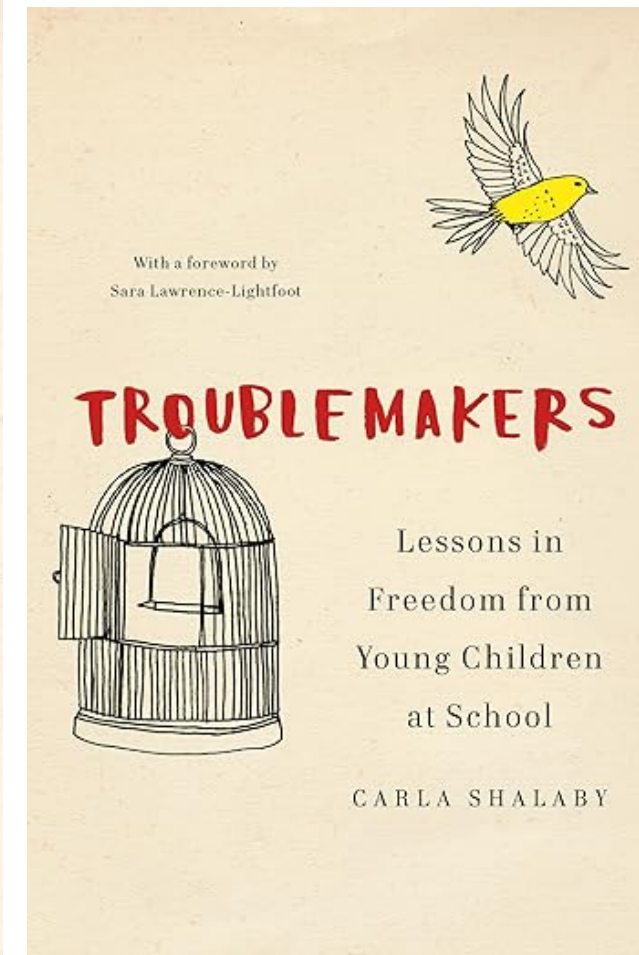
What Do We Know About Trust?



In Education Systems



Between Families, Educators,
and Students



In Business Leadership

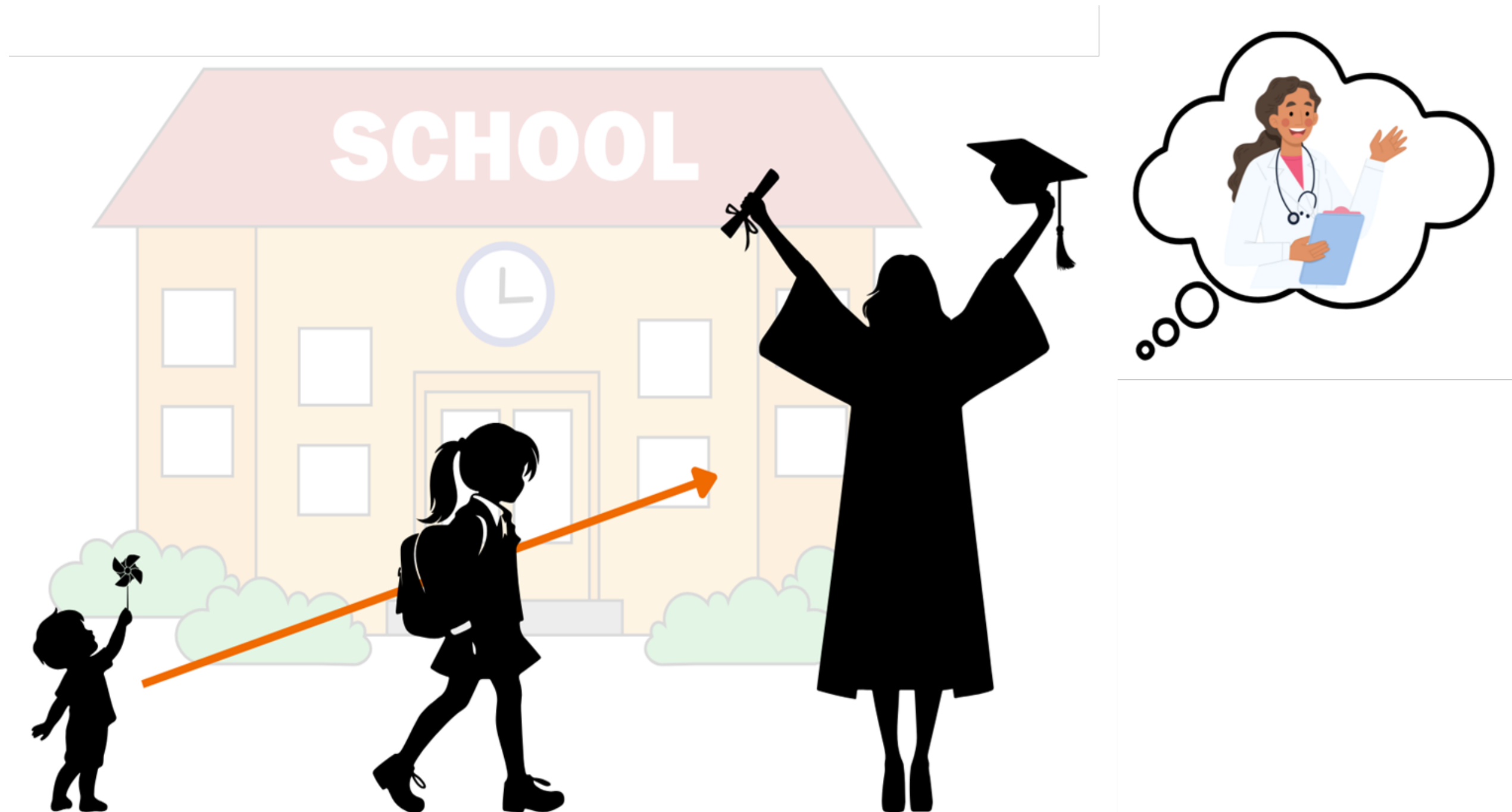
What Do We Know About Trust In Schools?



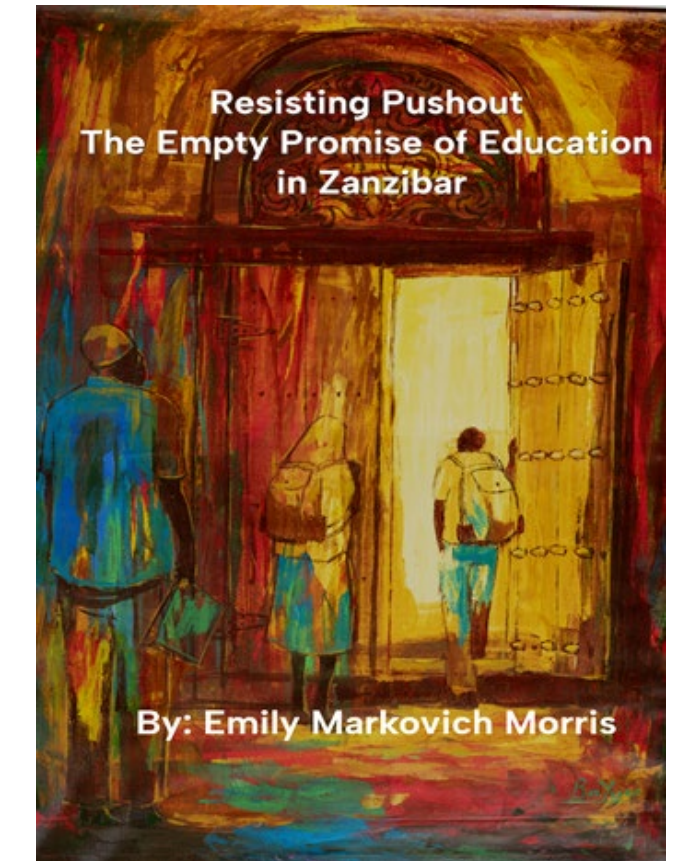
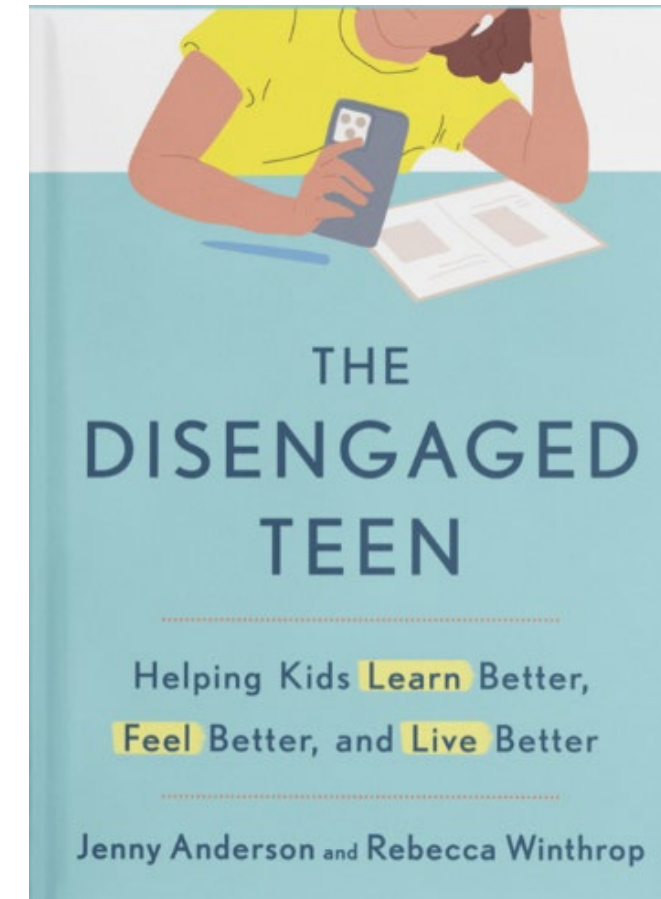
- **It starts with our own experiences.** Our experiences with trust and schools is often informed by our own experiences as learners, as well as other formative experiences.
- **In general, families want to trust schools.** Parents/caregivers want the best for their children and have to find some level of trust to ensure their child succeeds and thrives.
- **Teachers have diverse experiences with trust in education.** Teachers often gravitate to the profession to:
 - Heal the hurt (e.g., negative school experience, low trust)
 - Pay forward the privilege (e.g., positive experience, high trust)
 - Shape the future generation.
- **Trust in schools is messy and multidimensional.** When we break it down into observable elements it helps us dig into deeper conversations and find strategies.

Why Does Trust Matter?

Trust in schools helps ensure our young people are **learning and getting through school...**



- ...ensures that students are:
- feeling good
 - have a sense of belonging
 - engaged (have agency)
 - aspiring towards a positive future.



Trust From the Side of **Educators**

- **Trust impacts retention.** “Teachers reporting higher levels of relational trust were significantly less likely to leave or move [schools]” (Hopkins et al., 2019).
- **Trust is informed by different relationships.** Interpersonal (in relational to others in schools); intrapersonal (in one’s own experience of trust); organizational/institutional (in relational to the institution/district) (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tshannen & Hoy, 1998).
- **Trust impacts school change/improvement.** Trust is foundational to whether school improvement strategies take root and stick or don’t (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).



Trust From the Side of **Families**

- **Trust impacts engagement.** Families that felt trust and a sense of belonging were also more involved (Adams & Christenson, 1998; Morris & Nora, 2024; Santiago, 2016)
- **Trust is impacted by whether teachers/schools see and center a child's needs and potential.** A “safe space” and “trusting relationships” is “where other adults, who each care deeply though differently about the child, can share their unique perspectives and speak the truth” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003).
- **Trust can change over time.** It can often depend on age of child, type of institution, ecological factors, and other (OECD, 2014; Morris & Nora 2024).



Trust as Beliefs, Decisions, Actions



Source: Dietz and Den Hartog, 2006 based on McEvily et. al, 2003 in Cerna, 2014;
See, Speak and Behave comes from Covey, 2006.

PART TWO

The Elements of Trust



Six Global Lessons

on How Family, School, and Community
Engagement can Transform Education



Collaborative Research (16 countries, 6 continents)



**In 23 languages, in
16 countries**



With 15 organizations



**In 235 schools and communities
(with over 165 conversations)**



9,473 families

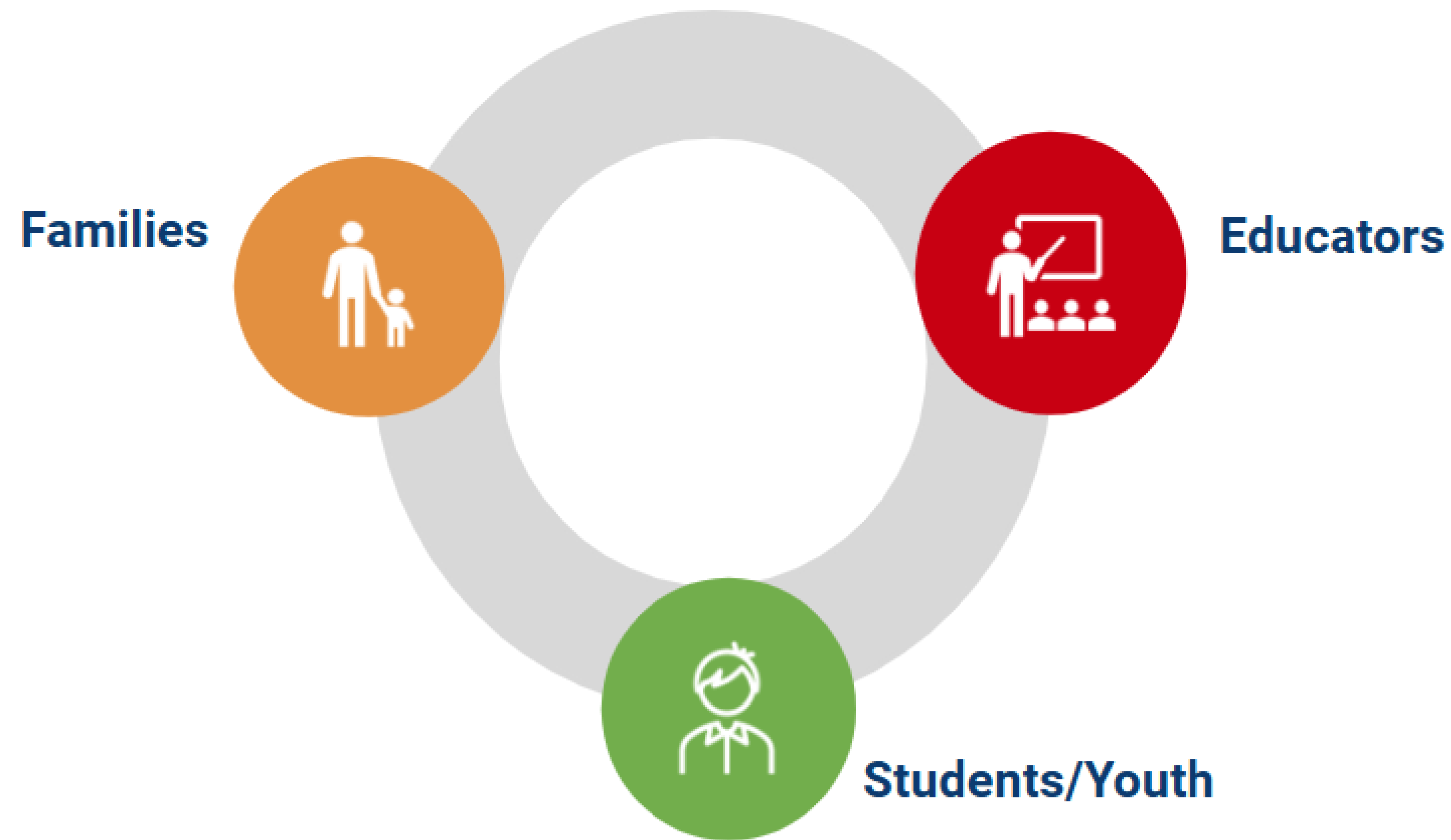


9,963 students



2,726 educators

Surveying & Listening to Different Perspectives



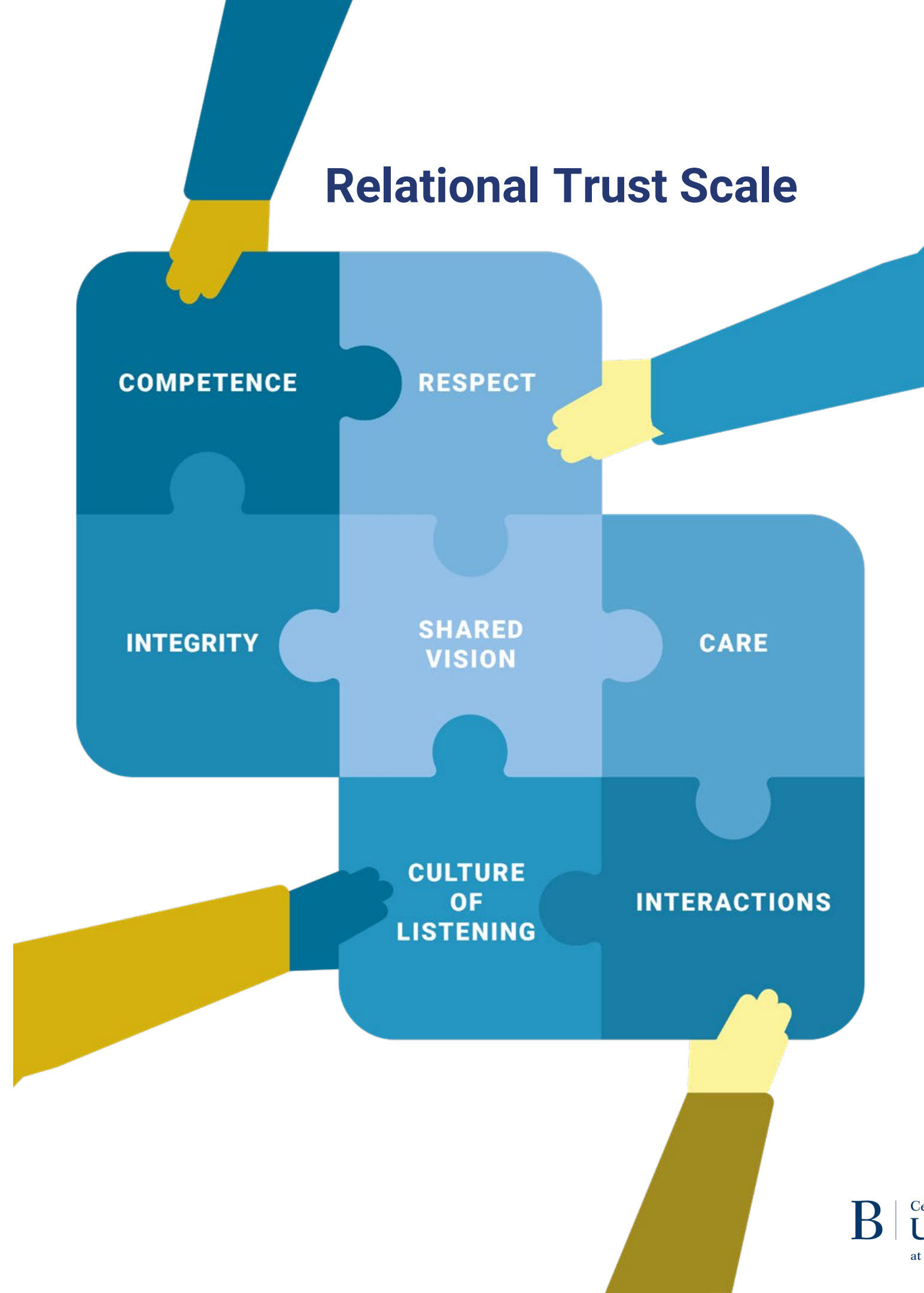
IN THE CHAT

**How do you know
whether trust is high or
low within your school?**

5 MINUTES



Elements of Relational Trust



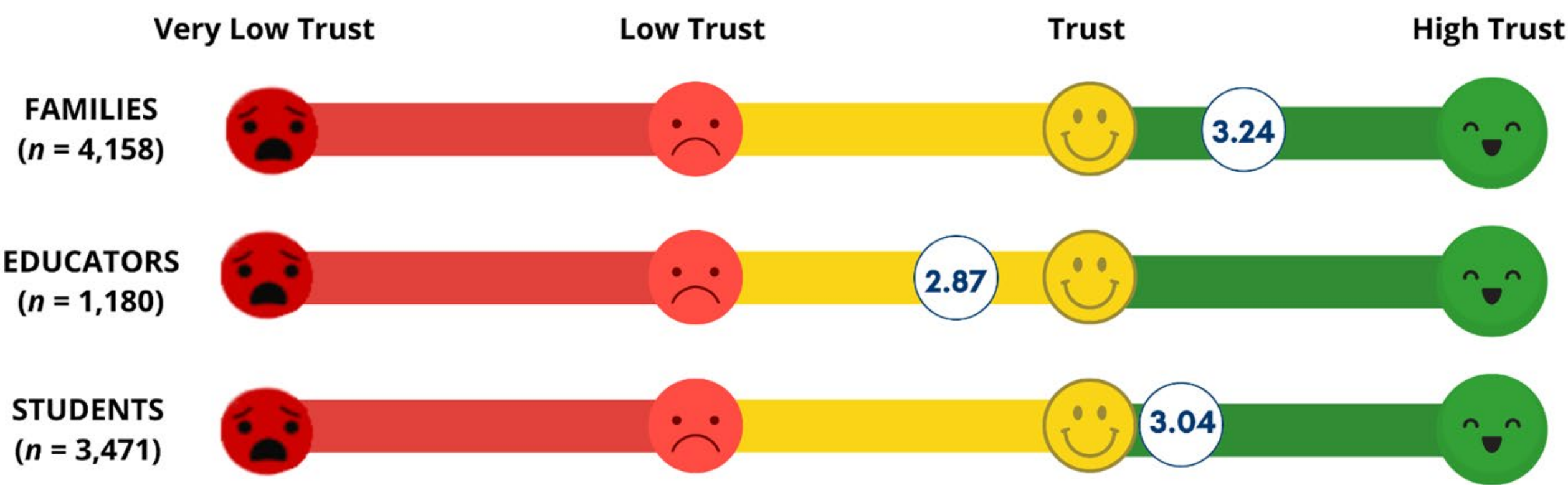
Relational Trust Elements

1	SHARED VISION	Even though our beliefs and perspectives will differ, do we (families, educators, students) have a common vision of what education should be?
2	CULTURE OF LISTENING	Do we seek each other's input and suggestions and have opportunities to listen to each other?
3	RESPECT	Do we show respect (for all the different ways we show up as people)?
4	CARE	Do we show each other (families, educators, students) that we care about them?
5	INTEGRITY	Do we follow through our promises and commitments with action?
6	COMPETENCE	Do we show each other that we think they are doing a good job (as educators, caregivers, students)?
7	INTERACTIONS	Do we have opportunities to interact with each other?

Theoretical sources: Bryk, A., & Schneider, B. (2002), Caspe & Hernandez, 2023; Mapp & Bergman, 2019; Winthrop, R., Barton, A. Ershadi, M., & Ziegler, L. (2021).

Global Pulse on Trust in Schools

Research Takeaway: Educators reported a lower average level of relational trust with families than families and students reported with educators. (*n*=7 countries)



Trust Shifts Across Education Levels

Research Takeaway: Relational trust decreases among families and educators as children move through school. ($n=7$ countries)



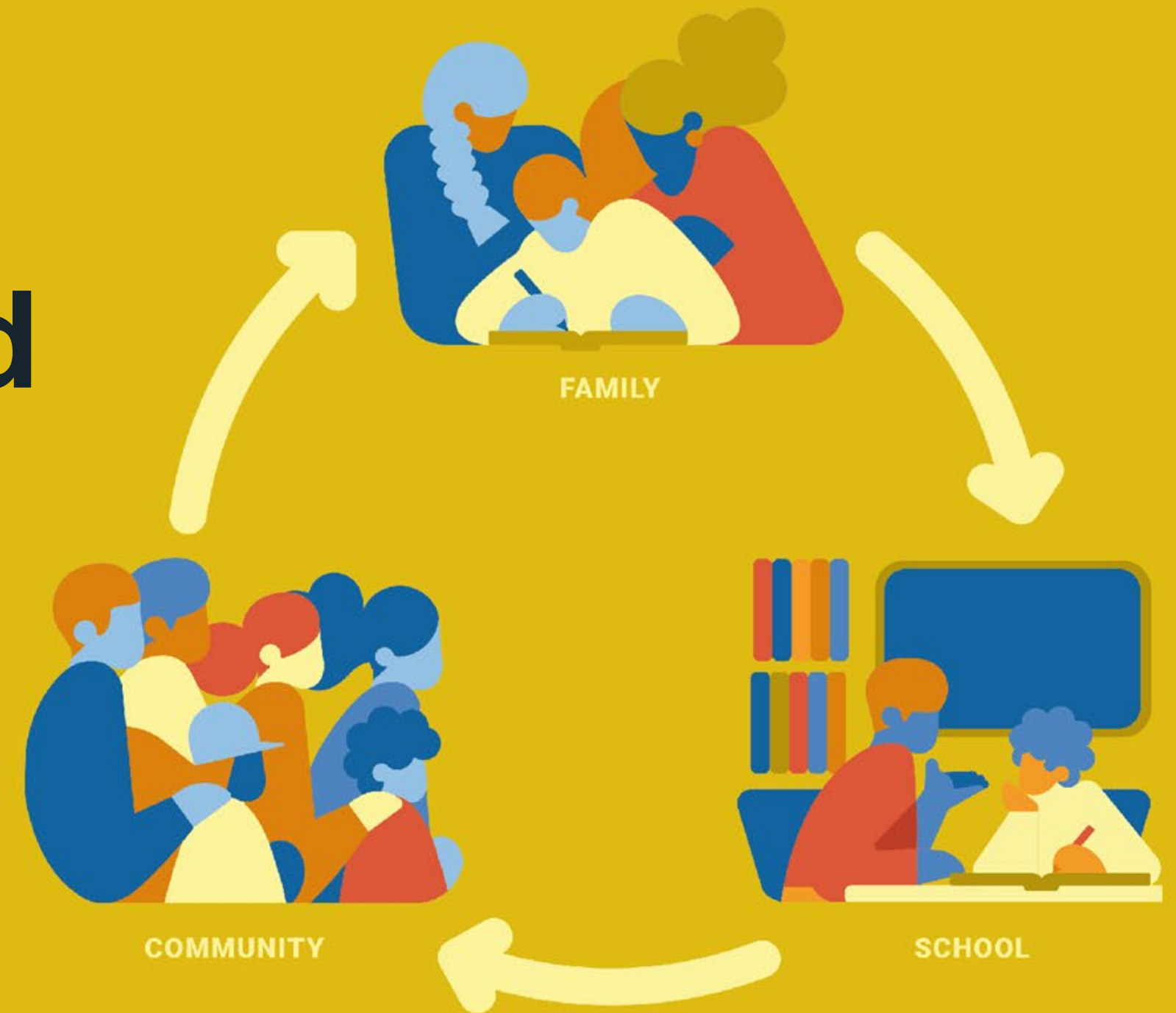
AI use can negatively impact trust between students and teachers

AI is impacting the nature of interactions between students and other elements of trust....

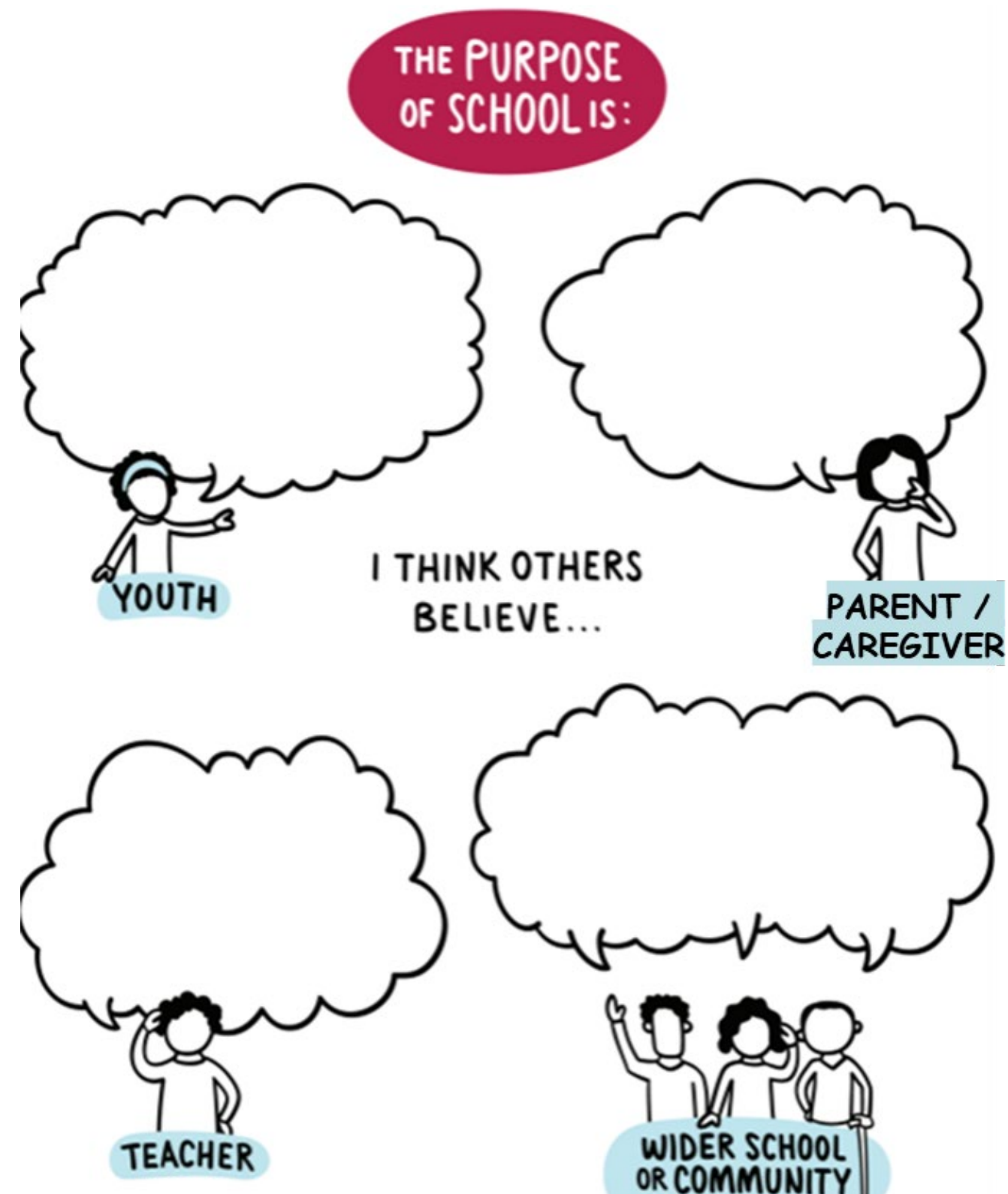
ELEMENTS OF TRUST	 Students...	 Teachers...
 Integrity	are worried about getting falsely accused.	are doubting the authenticity of student work.
 Competencies or capabilities	see teachers use AI for their work and can interpret this as a lack of investment or knowledge.	are struggling to measure and gauge what their students actually know.
 Shared vision	are told not to use AI but then see their teachers using it.	are pulled between the extremes (banning or ignoring), often without consulting students.

PART THREE

Strategies That Build Trust



Shared Vision



Do we share beliefs and perspectives on our vision — of education, of AI use, of learning outcomes, of attendance?

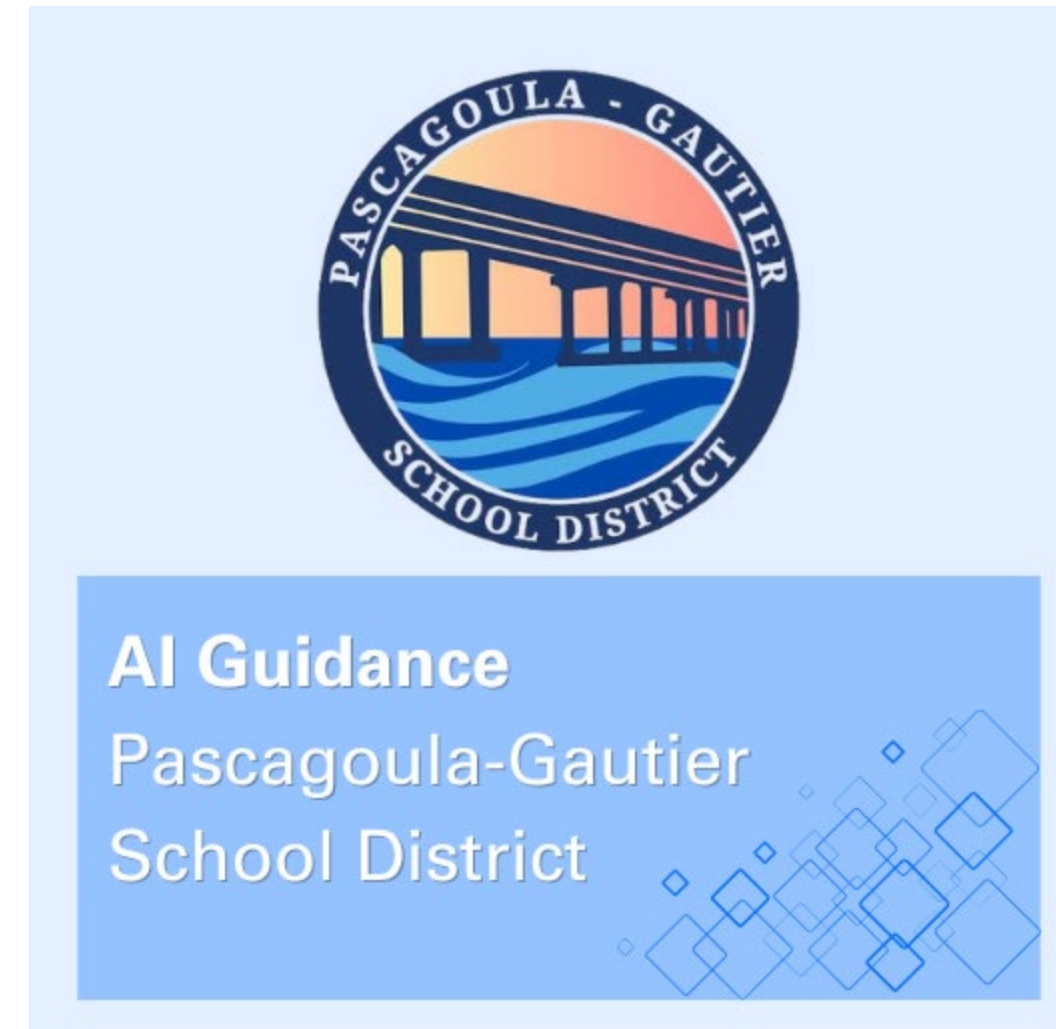
AI EXAMPLE:

Do we — families, educators, students — share beliefs about what “responsible,” “informed,” “appropriate,” or “safe” AI use actually means?

Practices for building a shared vision

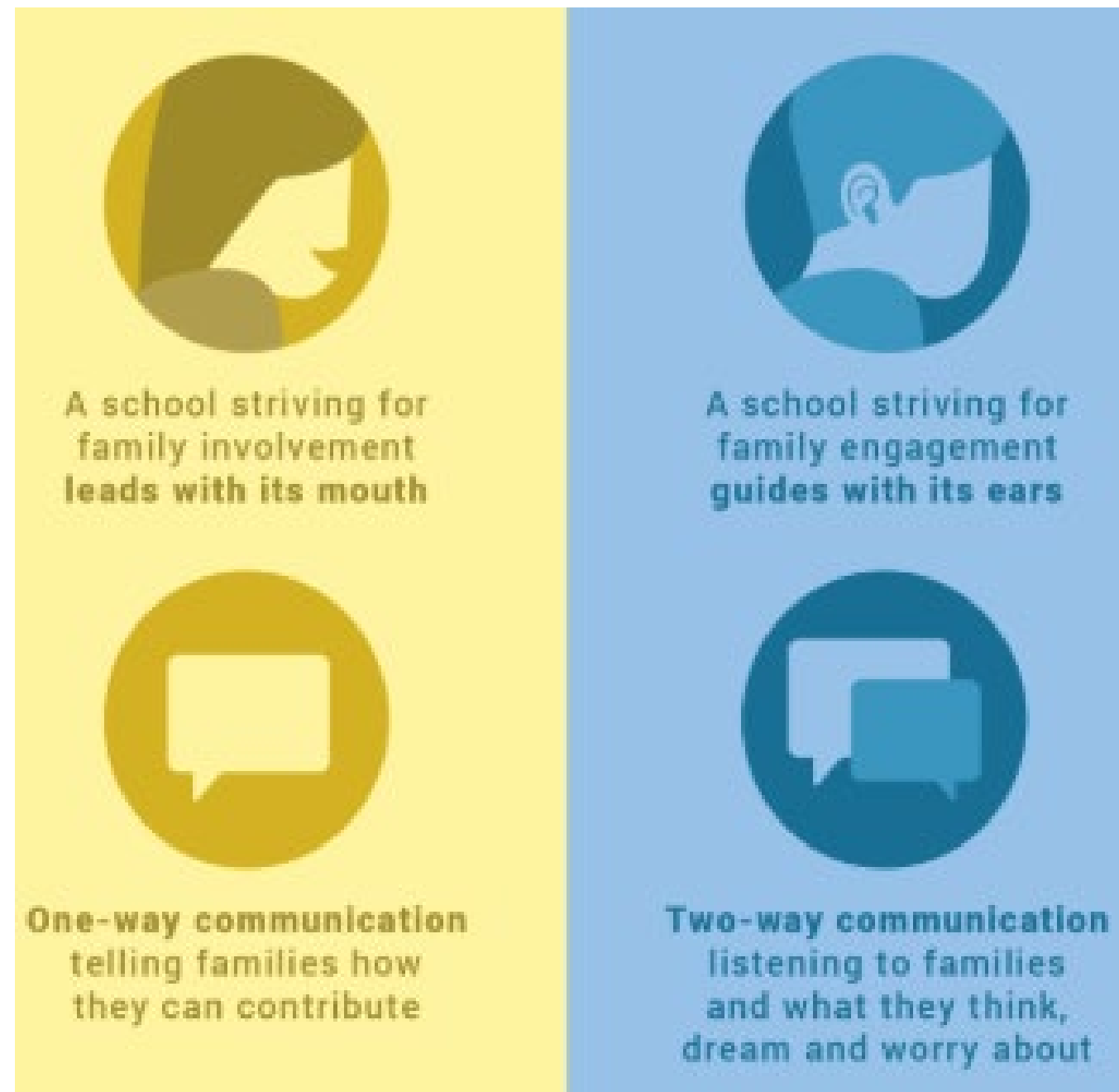


Capture perspectives
(student, family, educators)



**Co-create a school or
district AI policy**

Culture of Listening



Do we seek each other's input and suggestions, and make real opportunities to listen to each other?

AI EXAMPLE:

Are we listening to each other's concerns, ideas, and viewpoints on AI use — or announcing them?

Practices for fostering a culture of listening



Collaborative school planning



Listening circles

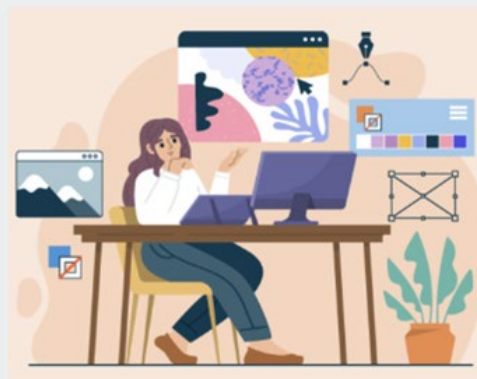
Integrity



What people think I do



What I should be doing



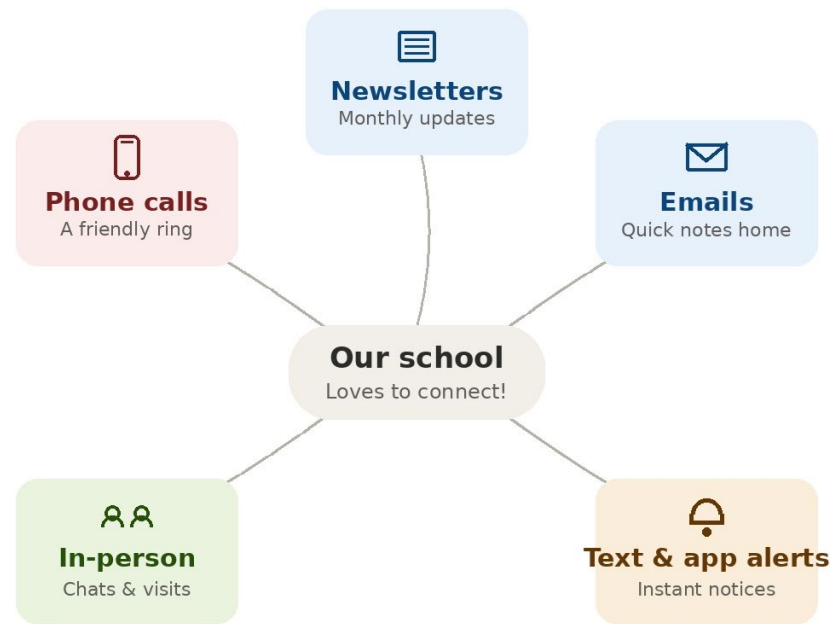
What I actually do

Do we follow through on our promises and commitments with action? Are we being truthful in what we do?

AI EXAMPLE:

Are we using AI the way we say we are using it?

Practices that make decision making and follow-through more collaborative and visible



Feedback loops
On decisions, feedback,
and progress



**One-on-one
communication
with families**



Policy co-design
(e.g. AI, tech, and social
media policies) with parent
and student councils

Source: [Enhancing student agency through school AI councils | Brookings Institution](#)

Competence/Capabilities



Do we believe in and value each other's capabilities? Do we show each other we think they are doing a good job — as educators, as caregivers, as students?

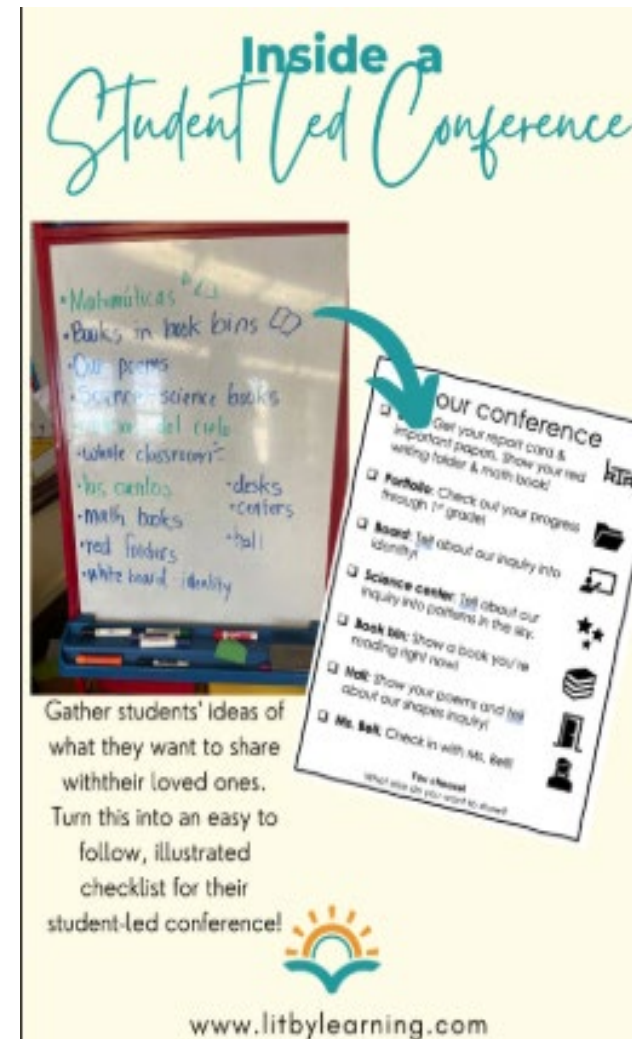
AI EXAMPLE:

Do we show teachers they serve a critical role AI cannot replace or replicate? Do we show students why we value their creative, cognitive, and relational growth?

Practices that show we value each other's capabilities



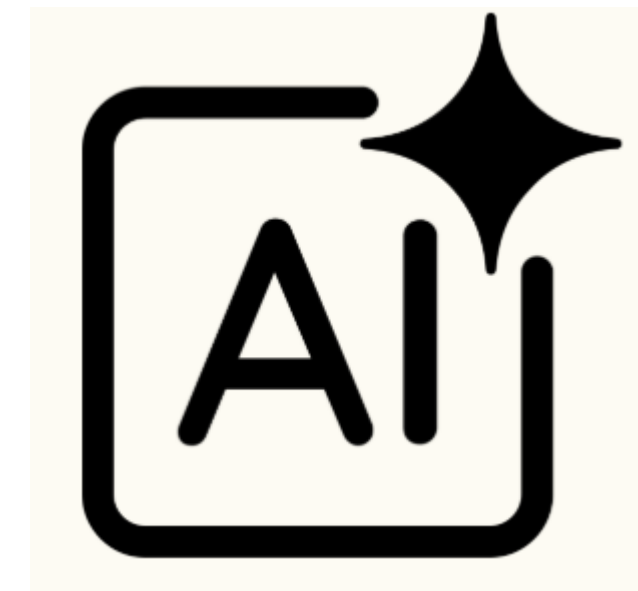
Co-design of assessments
(students and teachers)



Student-led conferences



Collaborative AI literacy learning



Beta-testing AI tools together

BREAKOUT ROOM ACTIVITY

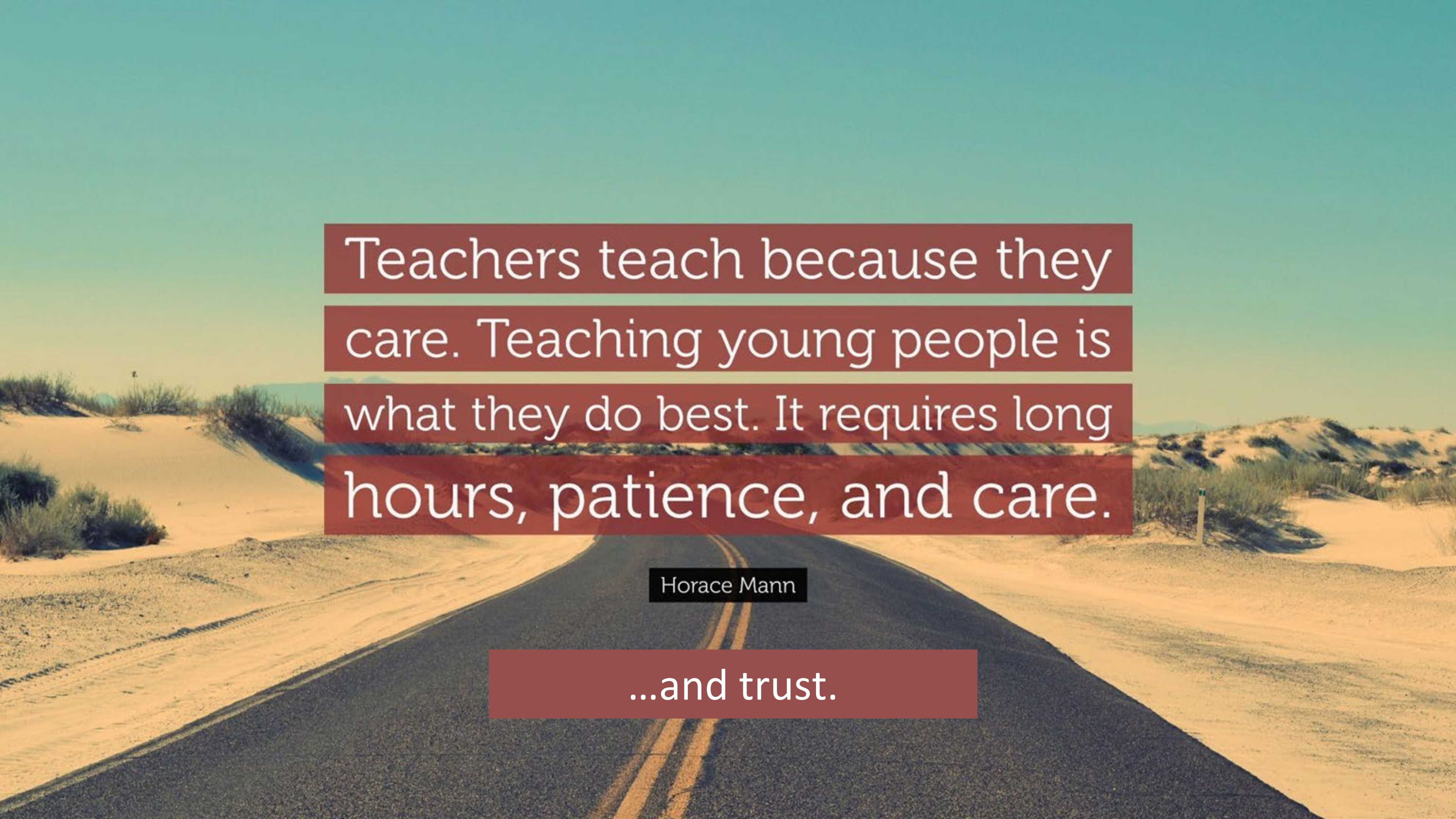
What strategies are you using — or could you use — to build one of these elements of trust?

10 MINUTES



Where to go from here?

- Build practices that deepen trust — deliberately, not incidentally.
- Highlight those practices publicly, so families can see them.
- Share strategies with other schools and organizations.
- Conduct pulse checks — ask, don't assume.
- Follow the relational trust research as it develops.



Teachers teach because they
care. Teaching young people is
what they do best. It requires long
hours, patience, and care.

Horace Mann

...and trust.

Learn more about our work



Tools

Research



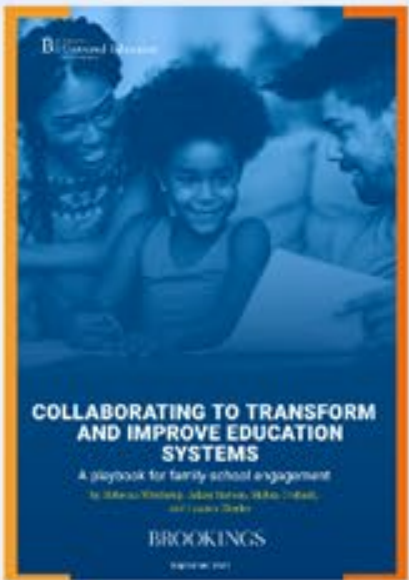
Conversation
Starter Tools



Global Rubrics
Tool



Strategy Finder



Playbook



Six Global
Lessons



Family-
Centered
Education
Systems

Thank you!



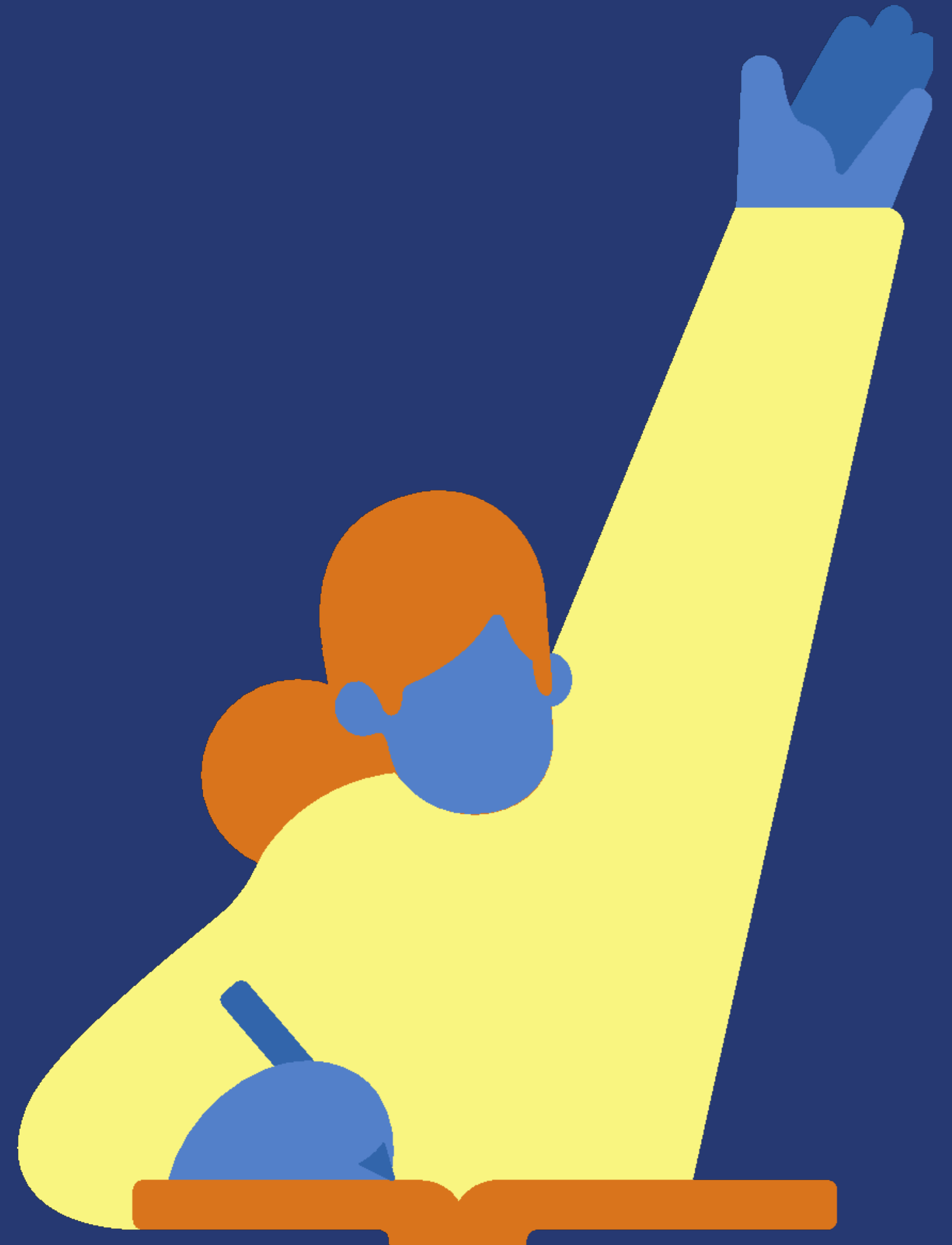
[@EmilyMarMorris](https://twitter.com/EmilyMarMorris)



emorris@brookings.edu

Contact the team at:

fscengagement@brookings.edu



contact us

ohiosfec@osu.edu

LinkedIn | ohiofamiliesengage.osu.edu



**THE OHIO STATE
UNIVERSITY**

CENTER ON EDUCATION AND
TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT

The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Department). The Department does not mandate or prescribe practices, models, or other activities described or discussed in this document. The contents of this presentation may contain examples of, adaptations of, and links to resources created and maintained by another public or private organization. The Department does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this outside information. The content of this presentation does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department. This publication is not intended to represent the views or policy of or be an endorsement of any views expressed or materials provided by any Federal agency. [89 FR 70333, Aug. 29, 2024]

The Center on Education and Training for Employment (CETE) at The Ohio State University are committed to freedom and intellectual diversity. The university invites speakers who share a range of ideas and experiences. The speakers invited to present at CETE events do not speak on behalf of The Ohio State University or CETE, any opinions they express are their own.