

Adjusting Educator Mindset toward Parents and Families

One of the challenges to positive parent/family and school relationships is the mindset some educators have regarding parents when their students struggle in school. That more traditional or conventional educator mindset is described in the first column. The middle column shows a shift in teacher mindset based on the principle that “parents are doing the best they can.” The third column includes examples of how an educator’s actions will change when they employ a trauma-informed, resilience-oriented mindset with parents.

Conventional Mindset	Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Mindset	Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Interactions
Parents and families choose to be resistant, hostile, or disengaged. It is disrespectful to educators.	I understand that parents may be impacted by trauma and their reactions are an attempt to find safety for themselves and/or their children. Regulation is difficult, even for adults.	Educators demonstrate empathy for family situations and circumstances. They listen, ask what happened, and what the family needs.
Parents and families believe education is not important.	Parents and families are speaking from their personal experience which may include different understandings of the benefits, expectations, and purposes of education, educators, and schools.	In an informative meeting, educators share with parents and guardians the benefits of their children and adolescents learning specific skills and meeting expectations in schools.
Parents and families do not teach expectations to their children.	I understand parents and families teach children expectations which do not always match those of the school.	Educators explore with parents and guardians expectations within their home, traditions, and morning and evening practices to understand any disconnects between the school and home setting.
Parents and families choose not to attend school events or meetings because they believe they are not important.	Parents and families may not attend school events due to a variety of barriers, including transportation, getting time off work, and fear of negative views the school may express toward them and their children.	School staff personally invite parents and families to school events, provide transportation when possible, and schedule meetings especially related to their students at times that are convenient for the families.

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Conventional Mindset	Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Mindset	Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Interactions
<p>Parents and families punish children to teach them a lesson, but they do not believe the school staff should do the same.</p>	<p>Parents and families punish children because they were punished at that age and that is the strategy they know.</p>	<p>School staff share openly their approach to changing negative behavior. They demonstrate new skills in classes and individual student meetings. Parents are invited to join support groups, English language classes, and parenting classes in settings that are identified as safe by parents.</p>
<p>Parents and families reject suspensions for their children because it is a burden for them.</p>	<p>Parents and families reject suspensions because they want their students to be in school to learn.</p>	<p>Educators and administrators explore possible options for discipline and addressing disruptive behavior with students and families. Alternatives to suspension are one approach to addressing behavior, and may include restorative practices, service learning, and additional instruction.</p>
<p>Parents and families do not care about their children and their future. They do not put forth any effort.</p>	<p>Parents care about their children and their future. They are doing the best they can.</p>	<p>All school staff acknowledge that parents care about all of their children. They acknowledge how they are helping their children grow and change positively. Parent struggles are also acknowledged.</p>
<p>Parents and families do not want to participate in planning for their children's education.</p>	<p>I need to ensure meaningful opportunities for parents and families to participate in planning for their children's education. It is important for me to understand what parents and families bring to the planning process.</p>	<p>Conferences and IEP or 504 meetings are scheduled when parents are able to attend. Alternatives are offered, such as virtual conferences. Information is shared prior to a meeting so parents can plan for meetings and actively participate in the planning or problem solving process.</p>