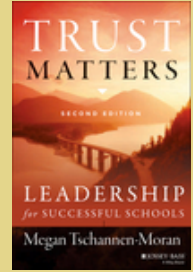




# THE MAIN IDEA

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## Trust Matters: Leadership for Successful Schools By Megan Tschannen-Moran (Jossey-Bass, 2014)

### S.O.S. (A Summary of the Summary)

*The main ideas of the book are:*

- ~ Building trust is crucial to school improvement
- ~ Principals need to be intentional and strategic about building trust among teachers, students, and families

*Why I chose this book:* I liked the way this book provided enough theory to help us understand how trust works, along with lots of practical, specific examples of how trust-building (and breaking!) occurs in real schools. I was also impressed, and a bit surprised, by how strongly research confirms the importance of trust in student performance, teacher retention, and other crucial elements of school success.

In addition, schools are going through seismic changes right now: new teacher evaluations, new standards, new tests, and new technology. Trust is the glue that will help educators successfully navigate these changes *together*. If you haven't put energy into building and improving trust at your school, now is an excellent time to start.

### The Scoop (In this summary you will learn...)

- ✓ How building trust at your school can have a powerful impact on student achievement, teacher morale, and parent involvement, according to research
- ✓ How you can develop each of the Five Facets of Trust in your leadership: benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability and competence
- ✓ How teachers decide whether to trust a principal
- ✓ Strategies for building and maintaining trusting relationships between teachers
- ✓ How to build trusting relationships with families and students
- ✓ What to do when trust breaks down
- ✓ How to implement professional development activities that build trust at your school

## Chapter 1 – *Why Trust Matters*

This chapter shows why building trust is essential for principals. Tschannen-Moran explains that trust is the "lubricant" that makes school improvements go smoothly and quickly. Trying to improve a school without trust is like trying to start a car without oil: everything gets stuck in place. If they lack trust in their leaders, teachers will spend most of their energy trying to protect themselves, *not* on improving their teaching or their school. In contrast, in schools with high levels of trust:

- Teachers are motivated and willing to try new strategies because they trust leaders to support them.
- Students are motivated and connected to the school because they trust their teachers.
- Families are supportive because the principal and teachers have built trusting relationships with them.

Unfortunately, many schools today are not trusting environments. There are many reasons for this, among them, political pressures and a general loss of faith in institutions. But it *is* possible to build trust at your school. Real-life examples below show what to do -- as well as what not to do.

### **Three School Principals and Trust**

Meet Gloria, Fred, and Brenda: three principals who share a school district, but not much else.

**Gloria** is a new principal, eager to help her students achieve great results. Unfortunately, she has not given much thought to building trust with teachers -- and her "shape up or ship out" attitude has mired the school in conflict. Morale is low, the union has filed multiple grievances, and meetings have become battlegrounds. Although Gloria entered the school with ambitious goals, the students have not made much progress. Gloria's urgency and patience are not enough to turn around a failing school.

Then, there's **Fred**, a much more experienced principal. Well-liked and easy-going, Fred can be relied on to provide a sympathetic ear -- but not much else. He dislikes conflict, so he doesn't help teachers or parents resolve disagreements. Not wanting to disappoint one side or another, he avoids making decisions. Conflicts escalate and interfere with opportunities to make progress.

**Brenda**, the third principal, succeeds where Gloria and Fred have failed; her students' performance is above the state average, despite several risk factors, and teacher morale is high. Why? Brenda balances high expectations with high levels of trustworthy support by:

- Sharing responsibility for school improvement
- Modeling a hard-working, caring, responsible attitude
- Helping teachers and families with problems (never shames them for having problems)
- Planning community-building events, like an annual fall sleepover at the school

Brenda is no magician. She just knows trust is essential for school success, and actively builds trust at her school, using a few key approaches described in this book.

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion (pp.14-15)

There are several questions at the end of each chapter in this book. It may be helpful to use these questions as part of professional development with teachers, or for your own reflection. A few are below:

1. Have you ever been part of a school or work environment where there was a lot of trust? If so, what was that like? What were the effects on learning and work? What might have been the reasons for the trusting atmosphere?
2. How about your current school -- does it have a trusting environment? How can you tell? (For instance, do teachers ask the principal for feedback with challenging situations? Do teachers look for opportunities to collaborate with each other?)

## Chapter 2 – *Defining Trust*

If we want to build trust, we need to know what it means. Trust is *willingness to be vulnerable to another person*. For instance, if a student trusts her teacher, she's willing to speak up when she doesn't understand something. Or, when a teacher trusts a colleague, she is willing to be vulnerable enough to ask for help with a problem. We are willing to be vulnerable with some people, and not others -- what makes the difference? Tschannen-Moran and her colleagues have identified five qualities that trustworthy people display. These are the *five facets of trust*. We feel trust when we believe the other person is *benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent*.

### **5 Facets of Trust**

*Benevolence* is sometimes called caring, goodwill, or wanting the best for everyone. Brenda, the principal of the high-trust school described in Chapter 1, is considerate of teachers, protects their rights, celebrates their successes and helps them through problems.

*Honesty* and *openness* are two other important qualities that teachers look for in principals. A principal who tells the truth, asks for feedback, collaborates on decisions, and is quick to admit mistakes, will find that teachers are usually open with her, too. They are more likely to seek out her feedback on instruction, and to let her know about small problems before they grow.

To be trusted, a principal also needs to be *reliable* -- to arrive on time, keep promises, and be consistent. No one is perfect, and principals are often over-burdened, but being generally reliable goes a long way toward ensuring the same quality from teachers. For instance, in Brenda's school, teachers knew that she arrived early and was willing to stay late to make sure all the important work got done. "Seeing her do that, well, the school gives 110 percent," a teacher said.

The final facet of trust is *competence*: being good at one's job. Just as we expect teachers to know how to teach their subjects, teachers expect principals to know about instruction, leadership, and school management. For instance, a competent principal helps teachers address misbehaving students and acts as a buffer between teachers and angry parents. A competent principal will also admit to *not knowing* some things, and look for opportunities to learn more. As a school leader, you have a tremendous impact on creating a trusting environment. The chart below summarizes each of the five facets of trust and lists some actions you can take to foster it.

Facet of Trust	Definition	Actions
1. Benevolence	Goodwill, wanting others to succeed, caring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Publicly appreciating the work of faculty and staff</li> <li>✓ Protecting confidentiality</li> <li>✓ Making fair decisions in disputes</li> </ul>
2. Honesty	Integrity, truthfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Keeping promises and honoring agreements</li> <li>✓ Admitting mistakes and issues</li> <li>✓ Accepting responsibility for problems</li> </ul>
3. Openness	Willingness to listen and consider others' opinions, feelings and ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Having an "open door" policy</li> <li>✓ Sharing important information</li> <li>✓ Sharing decision-making and power</li> </ul>
4. Reliability	Dependability, consistency, commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Fulfilling responsibilities</li> <li>✓ Having a "whatever it takes" approach to problem-solving</li> <li>✓ Coming through in times of crisis</li> </ul>
5. Competence	Being good at one's job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Solving problems creatively</li> <li>✓ Setting standards and supporting teachers in meeting them</li> <li>✓ Protecting teachers from interruptions and interference</li> </ul>

Although all of the facets are important, according to research, the most important qualities teachers look for in a principal are caring, integrity, and openness. That's because the principal is the most powerful person in a school building, and teachers are worried about abuses of that power. Small acts of kindness, even simply saying hello in a hallway, helps show that you mean well.

#### Questions for Reflection and Discussion (p. 45)

1. Which of the five facets do you often demonstrate in your work as a teacher or leader? Which of the facets would you like to improve? What are a few actions you can take to improve? (The chart above provides suggestions for each facet.)
2. How can an understanding of the five facets of trust help you improve a culture of trust at your school?

## Chapter 3 – Initial Trust

In the first seconds, minutes, and days of getting to know someone, we decide how much we can trust him or her. That early trust is sometimes called *initial trust*, and this chapter looks at the factors that influence it, such as reputation, institutional structures, and a sense of shared values. By understanding how trust develops, you will be prepared to support its growth at your school.

#### Factors that Initially Influence Trust

When we are first deciding whether or not to trust a new person, a lot of factors come into play. The first is our own *personal disposition to trust*. Tschannen-Moran suggests that a principal who wants to build a trusting school should have a trusting attitude and believe in the good intentions of teachers, parents, and students.

We also pay close attention to anything we've heard about the new person, that is, to his or her *reputation*. For instance, at Brenda's school, experienced teachers told newcomers that Brenda sometimes lost her temper, but was generally an excellent principal. In contrast, at Gloria's school, stories about her confrontational style spread quickly. Because humans have a "negativity bias," we are much more likely to remember and share stories about people acting badly than about them acting well. That is why it is important for principals to be careful about the messages they may be sending, even with seemingly minor actions.

When deciding whether to trust someone new, we see whether we *share similar values* with that person. For this reason, it is helpful for principals to take the initiative to trust that teachers do share their general values -- for instance, that they, too, want to help students succeed. When Gloria arrived at her school, she did the opposite. She looked at its record of low performance and assumed that teachers did *not* care about student learning. The conversations she initiated would have been more productive if she had taken a more trusting attitude: "We all want students to learn; how are we helping them, and where can we improve?"

In a diverse school, teachers from different backgrounds may initially distrust each other, because they may think their values are very different. A principal can build trust by providing opportunities for teachers to communicate about their values and backgrounds, so they better understand each other. By identifying communal goals, teachers will more likely trust each other.

We are also sensitive to the *mood* of a new environment: do people generally seem happy, resentful, anxious? Bad moods can affect not only individuals, but also entire schools -- they spread, eating away at morale, motivation and trust. Luckily, there is a simple solution: conversations that address people's underlying assumptions. For instance, there may be a schoolwide mood of resignation around student achievement in reading, based on teachers' assumptions such as, "There's nothing we can do. The families don't read at home, so there's nothing we can do." The principal can initiate a series of conversations to identify the specific issues with reading, brainstorm potential solutions the school can implement, and begin work. Teachers will then begin to see that solutions are possible.

### **Building Initial Trust**

Clearly, *communication* is vital to building initial trust. First, it is important that your actions communicate your values, sending a clear message about your caring and trustworthiness. It is a good idea to begin the school year with small, symbolic actions-- for instance, you might ask teachers how the lounge could be improved, and make those improvements with the help of parent volunteers.

It is equally important for a principal to foster communication: to ask teachers their opinions, start open dialogues about schoolwide issues, and create opportunities for teachers to talk and collaborate. Clear, frequent communications do wonders for addressing initial mistrust: minor issues don't get blown out of proportion, and people learn that they have many common values and goals. Below are some "do's and don'ts" that will help you communicate in ways that build trust.

Do's...	Don'ts...
Take actions that show caring and trustworthiness; communicate often and clearly; initiate conversations around important issues.	Take large-scale unilateral actions; communicate infrequently; be unavailable for conversations.
Take notes on a small pad or smartphone as you walk through the school to show your commitment to follow-through.	Forget to keep promises or enforce consequences.
Offer help with problem-solving, and solicit teachers' input.	Rely on your position to force your way.
Give teachers sincere appreciation and praise.	Take credit for others' work.

Over time, as trust grows at your school, you'll start to see examples of *authentic trust*: a stable, lasting bond, in which people understand each other, are able to predict what the other person will do in different situations, and can forgive occasional lapses. For instance, teachers at Brenda's school had such faith in her that they asked her advice about personal issues. Also, when Brenda lost her temper, as she occasionally did, they forgave her, because they had a deep understanding of her general goodwill toward them.

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. Have you ever trusted someone at work too little? What were the results? What might you do differently next time?
2. How can you create opportunities for staff to learn more about each other's values and backgrounds?

## **Chapter 4 – Betrayal**

To learn about trust, it is helpful to see what happens when trust is broken. This chapter shows how betrayal plays out in schools and districts. The effects on environment, morale and performance are often serious. The good news is that, when we understand how betrayal works, we are able to guard against it.

First, to clarify, a betrayal is a violation of trust with the potential to hurt another person. Betrayal happens "on purpose," as the result of someone's decision to potentially harm another person, to break trust. Why do people betray? Usually, betrayal is the result of dissatisfaction with a current situation. A person is dissatisfied, and as he or she becomes more resentful, benevolence and commitment to shared ethics decline. Resentment grows until he or she decides there's more to gain than to lose by the betrayal. Once the decision to betray is made, the person will try to justify it.

### **Two Kinds of Betrayal: Structural and Personal**

There are two different kinds of betrayal. The first has to do with failures of *systems*. For instance, a teacher may notice that some teachers are often in violation of the school's lateness policies, with no consequences, or that there is no system in place for resolving issues between teachers. The result of this betrayal is damaged trust in a school's structures.

The second kind of betrayal happens when someone is *publicly humiliated, criticized, blamed, or insulted*. That kind of betrayal happened frequently at Gloria's school. She had good intentions and high standards, but because she felt the need for change was so urgent, she did not spend enough time considering her words and publicly confronted teachers. She damaged their sense of professional identity; they felt that she didn't understand or appreciate their efforts to improve the school. Because betrayal causes long-lasting damage, principals who wish to develop high-trust cultures must *continue* to be diligent in maintaining that trust.

### **The Consequences of Betrayal**

Betrayal in schools often has three negative consequences: hampered communication, decreased shared decision making, and a decline in the commitment of the teachers.

1. *Hampered communication*: The goal of communication becomes self-protection, so people are less honest and open. That means that a principal may not hear about a minor issue until it becomes major -- and very difficult to address.
2. *Decreased shared decision-making*: If a principal distrusts teachers, he may limit their participation in decision-making. Alternatively, if teachers feel shared decision-making structures are only "for show," they will limit their own participation.
3. *Decline in teachers' commitment*: After several disappointments with a school's structures, teachers may conclude the school is not set up to support their success. Or, in the case of a more personal betrayal, they may feel that a principal "has it in for them." In either case, teachers stop going beyond what is prescribed in their job descriptions.

### **Minimizing Betrayals at School**

Although we can't control other people's decisions, it is possible to create an environment that minimizes the chances of betrayal. For instance, Brenda creates strong schoolwide structures, and consistently enforces policies; people know that they will be treated fairly. In her relationships with teachers, she holds them to high standards, while also being tactful and caring.

A trustworthy principal challenges teachers and holds them accountable, while keeping their trust. It's a question of balancing tasks and relationships: being willing to have difficult conversations, and also being willing to be careful and sensitive during those conversations. A trustworthy principal consistently sets and reinforces norms of trust, openness and respect.

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. Have you ever felt betrayed at work? If so, how did it affect your work or your learning? Were you able to trust the person again?
2. How do people at your school handle conflict? Do they avoid it at all costs or do people openly discuss and resolve conflicts?
3. Describe a time you and a colleague successfully resolved a disagreement. What did you learn from the experience?

## **Chapter 5 – Revenge**

This chapter describes what might happen after a betrayal, or series of betrayals, at a school. Some schools may fall into a "spiral of distrust," but other schools, where leaders have worked to establish a trusting professional culture, are more resilient.

### **Responses to Betrayal**

After the initial shock, people can have a range of reactions to being betrayed: they might withdraw from the relationship, confront the perpetrator, or forgive her. You may be surprised to hear that the most harmful of these responses is withdrawal, which usually includes continuing resentment, and offers no chances of repairing the relationship.

In a school, where everyone is interdependent, one person's *withdrawal* can have far-reaching effects. If a teacher decides to stop speaking to a colleague in her grade, they won't have a chance to work together to help a student who is struggling in both of their classes. Resentment can also fester, leading to behaviors that undermine a school's goals.

*Confrontations*, in contrast, offer at least some hope of reconciliation. Of course, if someone is seeking a confrontation in order to get revenge, it will most likely end with a new cycle of feuding between the two people. However, if the confrontation is meant to help repair the relationship and if both people are able to be considerate, then it may well end in a renewal of their relationship. Confrontation gives the perpetrator a chance to understand how she's harmed someone, and to make amends. As a result, the victim may be willing to forgive. Unfortunately, at Gloria's school, confrontations usually did not end well, nor were resentments ever addressed. The next section gives a real-life example of responses to betrayal at Gloria's school.

### **Gloria's School: A Spiral of Distrust**

Although Gloria was lacking in all the facets of trust discussed in Chapter 1, the one teachers talked about most often was *benevolence*: a sense that she wanted them to succeed and be happy at the school. Gloria seemed to want to "get rid of" all teachers who presented any kind of challenge to her. Gloria also lacked *openness*. She didn't share much information with teachers, or ask for their opinions; and when they shared issues or challenges with her, her response was often to blame them. As a result, shared decision-making and opportunities for creative problem-solving stopped, and teachers became extremely guarded in sharing information.

Although Gloria had good intentions for improving the school, her ability to make change was limited. The only power she had was her formal power: to hand out punishments (such as negative evaluations) and rewards. Successful principals are able to leverage the informal, but often much more effective, power that comes from positive, trusting relationships. As teachers told each other about incidents like those above, Gloria's schoolwide reputation declined, teachers' challenges grew, and schoolwide motivation and morale shrank. Gloria reacted with more attempts to punish teachers and force them to comply. Those attempts were unsuccessful, and instead, led to a "spiral of distrust," with declines in trust and trustworthiness on both sides.

### **A Culture of Control**

When distrust pervades a school, as it did at Gloria's school, it can lead to a *culture of control*, characterized by top-down decision-making and micromanagement. Rules multiply, teachers' autonomy declines, and student performance suffers. A culture of control is not a good fit for a school, because schools thrive on innovation and flexibility. Teachers need to be able to creatively address students' individual, evolving needs, using their professional knowledge and judgment. In order to improve, teachers also need to be able to try new ideas, experiment, and learn.

In addition to reducing a school's effectiveness, a culture of control also eats away at morale. Teachers resent being micromanaged, because they see it as an attack on professionalism; and they resent being forced into one-size-fits-all plans because they know better ways to reach their students. In a rigid school culture, teachers don't have opportunities to learn and grow, and, motivation suffers.

### **A Culture of Professionalism**

The alternative to a culture of control is a *professional culture*, which values professional expertise over blind compliance. In a professional culture, rules are "flexible guidelines to help solve problems." They reflect best practices, and testify to a school's expectations of its members. For example, when Tschannen-Moran was a school principal, her school had just three simple rules: "This is a safe place; this is a caring place; this is a learning place."

In Brenda's school, teachers met and exceeded professional expectations, and, in turn, Brenda was "strategically lenient." For example, if coverage was available, she would allow teachers to leave school in order to attend their own children's events.

One symbolic action a principal could take to introduce teachers to the concept of a professional culture, would be to present a flipped organizational chart. In a flipped chart, administrators are at the bottom of an inverted triangle, providing support for teachers at the top. One caveat: the chart has to be "true." If leaders really do re-structure their jobs so that they are primarily supporting teachers with resources, encouragement and advice, then the flipped chart can help transform the school's culture.

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. Have you ever seen any instances of revenge at a school or workplace? If so, what were some of the consequences of the revenge?
2. Does your school seem to have a culture of trust, or of control? If the school currently has a culture of control, what might help it become a more trusting place? Consider possible changes to rules, structures, and procedures.

## **Chapter 6 – Teachers Trusting One Another**

So far, the book has focused on trust between teachers and a principal. However, teachers' trust in each other is equally important to a school's success, with powerful effects on learning, morale, and environment. In this chapter, you'll find out what creates trust among teachers and how principals can foster it.

### **How Trust between Teachers Forms**

Chapter 1 introduced the five facets of trust. Below are the first four, with examples of how *teachers* can foster them with colleagues.

1. *Benevolence*: Bringing meals to a sick colleague, helping new teachers
2. *Honesty*: Taking responsibility for mistakes, keeping promises
3. *Openness*: Sharing strategies, challenges, information and equipment
4. *Reliability*: Covering classes during emergencies, following through on commitments

The fifth facet, *competence*, is more complicated. Because teachers have traditionally been isolated, with little impact on one another's work, it is possible that a teacher may think a colleague is incompetent at teaching, but still trustworthy as a member of the school community. However, as schoolwide accountability grows, and as schools become increasingly collaborative places, competence is becoming more and more important in teachers' decisions to trust one another.

### **The Payoffs of Faculty Trust**

When teachers trust each other, collaboration, motivation, and conflict resolution improve, with positive effects on student learning.

1. *Increased and more productive teacher collaborations*. Teachers are more open with each other and more willing to collaborate when there is high trust. They will willingly seek each other out for help with challenges, and share successful ideas. For this reason, a high-trust environment is a great launching pad for a professional learning community or teacher teams.
2. *Increased sense of efficacy*. Efficacy is professional confidence, a "can-do attitude." Research shows that teachers with high self-efficacy are willing to put in lots of effort, be patient and persistent, and persevere through challenges. So, it's no surprise that efficacy is positively related to student achievement. According to research, when faculty have confidence in their work and the work of their colleagues, schoolwide achievement increases, regardless of students' socioeconomic status. Efficacy is most likely to grow within an atmosphere of trust, because teachers are willing to try new ideas and take risks to improve their work and get more positive results.

3. *Constructive conflict resolution*. How teachers respond to conflict can either enhance trust or damage it. In schools with high levels of trust, teachers are more likely to handle conflicts well, so that they preserve, and sometimes even strengthen, relationships.

### **Fostering Trust between Teachers**

Principals set the tone for teachers to trust each other by promoting a culture of professionalism, cooperation and caring. How, specifically, might they do that?

First, principals *set and reinforce expectations for how teachers will treat each other*. To do this, the principal must be explicit about norms for professional relationships, and back up those norms by mediating conflicts and directly addressing violations of these norms. A principal can also help teachers learn conflict resolution skills, so that they are better able to handle disagreements. Poor conflict management can cause a major drop in schoolwide trust, so it is worthwhile to invest time in this area.

In addition, a principal who understands conflict may be able to *adjust procedures or initiate conversations* that minimize unnecessary battles. Conflict is usually a result of people thinking one of the following: (1) Their goals are incompatible, or (2) Resources are scarce. For example, when Brenda arrived at Brookside School, she noticed that teachers were hoarding supplies. She realized there was a perception of scarcity, so she stocked and re-stocked a supply room until everyone had what they needed. The hoarding stopped because teachers had learned to trust that the school would provide supplies.

In another example, teachers at Brenda's school have many different teaching styles, some use mostly traditional approaches, while others try more progressive strategies. To proactively address the perceptions that their goals are incompatible, Brenda recognizes and publicly appreciates differences in their styles. She also draws attention to the ways in which all the different styles support the school's goals for student learning rather than putting one type of teacher on a pedestal.

Finally, a principal can *put carefully planned collaborative structures into place*. One example is *strengths-based peer observations*. If your school is still in the process of building trust, these observations are a good option because they get teachers to collaborate in a positive way, further enhancing trust.

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. How might you foster trust between teachers at your school? What structures might help teachers gain more trust in each other?
2. What kinds of activities might help new teachers begin to trust their colleagues and school leaders?

## **Chapter 7 – Cultivating Trust with Students**

Anyone who has been in a classroom knows the importance of trusting relationships. However, they may not know that research has demonstrated that trusting relationships between students and teachers has a clear, strong impact on academic achievement.

### **Trust Between Students and Teachers**

Why is trust between teachers and students such a strong predictor of student achievement, across multiple studies, and regardless of students' socio-economic status? One reason is that education relies on students' trust in the teacher's words. The facts a teacher shares about ancient Egypt or the periodic table might not be self-evident; for students to learn, they need to trust the teacher's knowledge. Trust also enables students to take academic risks and try out new skills, both of which are essential for learning. As one teacher said, "Once I have developed that trust, and they really know I care, then I can push them and learning really takes off."

In addition to students' trust in teachers, *teachers' trust in students* is an important influence on achievement. This trust is so powerful it can even overcome the effects of poverty. When teachers trust their students, they can devote their professional energy to creating effective learning environments and instruction. They focus on teaching and learning, not self-protection.

Unfortunately, many classrooms are not trusting places. Sometimes there is a self-reinforcing spiral: the teacher mistrusts the students when she perceives them as disrespectful and tries to control them with rewards and punishments. However, these attempts to coerce good behavior usually backfire and end up demotivating and alienating students. In fact, research shows that the opposite is true. When teachers trust their students they are more likely to create a more academic environment in which learning can occur. The chart below contrasts a trusting classroom community with a controlling one.

	<b>Classroom of Community</b>	<b>Classroom of Control</b>
Trust Level	high trust	low trust
Strategies	relationship-building	extrinsic rewards and punishments
Effect	motivation, learning, connection and <i>achievement</i> rise	motivation, learning and connection decline

Teachers' trust in students is often influenced by whether they feel *respected* by those students. However, respect may look very different across cultures and social classes. If the teachers come from a different background and culture than their students, misunderstandings can lead to distrust. For this reason, actively building trust is especially important in schools in which students and teachers have different backgrounds. A principal can promote learning about the different cultures represented within the school, and help find commonalities across the cultures. Ultimately, because they are in the positions of power, it is up to leaders and teachers to cultivate an attitude of trust toward parents and students.

### **Understanding Attachment Theory**

Traditionally, many schools have operated under a system of rewards and punishments, which is based on a fundamental distrust of students -- a sense that children are only willing to learn and behave if rewards and punishments are in place. Lately, however, researchers have been asking: are students really just driven by the urge to maximize rewards and avoid punishments? Why, then, do we see so many "frequent flyers" -- students who continue to misbehave, even in the face of increasingly severe punishments? Researchers have suggested that attachment theory might be a better lens for looking at ways to improve schools.

According to *attachment theory*, humans are social beings, with a need for a connection. Children want to connect with adults and other children in order to be part of a community. They also feel a natural motivation to learn about and explore their world. Trusting relationships help children feel safe enough to explore. When children come to school, they have already had experiences with attachments within their families. If their parents built *secure bonds* with them, and the children feel safe and cared for, then they will most likely arrive at school able to make friends, get along with teachers, and learn. But, if the family bonds are *insecure*, children may have trouble trusting others and making connections. They may act out with misbehavior or avoid interacting with others. They may lack the *skills* (not the motivation) to behave properly.

Teachers can help those children by establishing secure bonds with them. It is usually much more productive to address problematic behaviors, and help students learn appropriate social skills, once a trusting relationship has been established. What's more, a bond with a trusted adult can make a huge difference for students from troubled homes; in fact, in a study of high-achieving students with difficult family circumstances, many of them said support from an adult outside their families was crucial to their success.

### **Attachment Theory and the School Principal**

In addition to helping teachers understand students, attachment theory may also be useful for principals' understanding of teachers. Teachers may feel vulnerable in their classrooms, where they are outnumbered by students, and therefore may be unwilling to experiment with new strategies. A principal who provides consistent support and encouragement creates a secure bond of trust with teachers, which gives them the confidence to experiment.

A principal's support is also important to teachers' relationship-building with students. Teachers who feel that the principal is consistently supportive of their efforts to manage students' behaviors will feel less vulnerable in the classroom, and will be less likely to act aggressively. According to a study, "The more visible and supportive the principal was in the school, the lower the incidence and intensity of student misbehavior."

### **Creating High-Trust Classrooms with the Five Facets of Trust**

Students are often able to tell whether a teacher trusts them; their trust in her will reflect her trust in them. Moreover, studies suggest that students who feel trusted by their teachers are more likely to make academic gains. Therefore, to begin a trusting relationship, a teacher should demonstrate trust in her students, by, for example, sharing small, appropriate details about her life. The chart below outlines the five facets of trust discussed earlier and lists ways teachers can build the facets of trust in their classrooms.

Facet of Trust	Definition	Actions
1. <i>Benevolence</i>	Goodwill, wanting others to succeed, caring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Talking to students about their needs, interests, and goals</li> <li>✓ Spending time helping students meet personal goals</li> </ul>
2. <i>Honesty</i>	Integrity, truthfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ "Walking the walk" -- matching actions with words</li> <li>✓ Admitting mistakes and accepting responsibility</li> <li>✓ Appropriately sharing their personalities, interests, and lives outside of school</li> </ul>
3. <i>Openness</i>	Willingness to listen and consider others' opinions, feelings and ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Having a nonjudgmental attitude toward students; listening well</li> <li>✓ Engaging in open-ended discussions</li> <li>✓ Appropriately sharing classroom decision-making</li> </ul>
4. <i>Reliability</i>	Dependability, consistency, commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Consistently and fairly enforcing classroom rules</li> <li>✓ Fulfilling responsibilities</li> <li>✓ Making fair decisions in conflicts between students</li> </ul>
5. <i>Competence</i>	Being good at one's job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Knowing subject area and pedagogy</li> <li>✓ Modeling emotional competence; e.g., identifying emotions, asking for help</li> </ul>

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Have you ever been in a classroom where there was a high level of trust between the teachers and the students? What did you notice about teaching and learning in that classroom?
2. What is one new strategy for fostering students' trust that teachers could try? (The chart above provides some examples.)

## **Chapter 8 – Building Bridges of Trust With Families**

Trust is crucial to building sustained and productive connections between families and schools. Research shows that trusting relationships between schools and families impacts student achievement. This chapter describes how school leaders and faculty members can build trust with families, even in challenging situations.

### **The Facets of Family-School Trust**

The same five facets of trust also apply to relationships between families and schools. For most parents, *benevolence* -- the sense that people in the school care about, like and want good results for their children -- goes a long way toward building trust. *Honesty* and *reliability* are also important. For example, a school demonstrates reliability by following through with plans for an intervention to help a child. If complications arise with the intervention plan, the school demonstrates honesty by promptly informing the parents, taking responsibility, and working toward a solution.

A sense of *openness* -- sharing information and collaborating on decisions -- can be enhanced with new technologies that let teachers post assignments and grades. However, it is best that teachers *first* meet and establish relationships with families in person or over the telephone, and then continue communicating with the help of technology. In Brenda's school, every teacher is required to make an initial, positive contact with every parent at the start of the year.

Families also want to trust in teachers' professional *competence*. This trust may increase during the school year, as parents see the effects of teachers' strategies. Teachers can help the process along by sharing their classroom methods with parents, asking for feedback when appropriate, and showing parents how they can support their children's learning.

There are some obstacles to trust between schools and families. At some schools, teachers and principals distrust parents, seeing them as "intruders" who interrupt important work. Where there's low trust, there's also usually little outreach, and the lack of communication creates further distrust. At other schools, faculty members may lack confidence in their abilities to build relationships with families, perhaps due to language barriers or socio-economic differences.

### **Fostering Trust with Families**

A principal begins to build trust by modeling a trusting, communicative attitude and actively reaching out to parents. Note that a study demonstrated the importance of *quality* over quantity in communication with families; a quarterly letter to parents about the general goals and activities of the class, translated into all the parents' primary languages, is a more effective way to build trust than a whole series of weekly, English-only letters about minutiae.

It is also important to take a *strengths-based* approach to families, recognizing that most parents want to support their children's education. How are families *already* providing this support, and how might they build on that? (Perhaps a newsletter can celebrate ways families are helping their children succeed: overseeing homework, talking to teachers, making sure they get enough sleep, etc.)

Also, if structures for shared decision-making with families are not already in place, a principal can create them, making sure that they are flexible enough to allow parents who work or have other demands on their time to participate. Other successful strategies principals have used to improve communication and collaboration with families include:

- Helping teachers learn strategies for productively working with families: strengths-based approaches to families, understanding the cultures represented in the school, or sharing instructional strategies with parents
- Finding ways to help teachers communicate across language barriers
- When necessary, mediating conflicts between parents and teachers, modeling respect and trustworthiness
- Helping meet families' needs outside of school, perhaps hiring a liaison to connect them with social services

Successful strategies for teachers, like those for principals, are built around a strengths-based approach to families. One successful strategy is to boost parents' confidence in their abilities to help their children with school, building upon what they already do, and sharing instructional techniques. For example, perhaps a father already checks that his child's homework is complete. If a teacher shares her grading rubric with him, he might also be able to go over it with his child, checking on the goals outlined in the rubric.

### **Building Trust in High-Poverty Schools**

Trusting relationships between families and schools can actually overcome the effects of poverty on achievement. And yet, building trust may be especially challenging for schools in high-poverty areas, where there may be larger gaps between parents and teachers.

For example, African-American parents might complain that teachers seem to react poorly to their attempts to advocate for their children. On the other hand, teachers might be interpreting the parents' advocacy as questioning their competence. In fact, both parents and teachers have the same goal -- to support the children at the school -- and neither group is intending to disrespect the other. To build trust, teachers and parents needed help understanding one another's approaches and communication styles. Cultural knowledge and responsiveness are crucial in bridging gaps between parents and teachers.

#### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What are some successful family engagement strategies you have implemented at your school, or seen at other schools?
2. Describe one or two additional strategies for building trust with families that you would like to try.

## **Chapter 9 – Restoring Broken Trust**

If trust has broken down at your school, the good news is that it can be restored, and perhaps even deepened. The bad news is that to restore trust, you'll need to have some uncomfortable conversations about what happened, how people feel about it, and how the school can move forward. In this chapter, you'll learn how to effectively manage those conversations.

#### **The 4 A's of Absolution**

You might think a successful school, such as Brenda's, would never experience a serious breakdown in trust, but that's far from true. Trust can break down anywhere; whether the school ultimately becomes a more or less trusting place depends on how the leader responds. When Brenda requested that teachers at her school disregard a directive from the union, that caused discord; many of her faculty members questioned their faith in her. However, Brenda was able to repair trust by following a four-step process, *The 4 A's of Absolution*. She admitted her mistake, apologized, asked for forgiveness, and made amends. Below, are more details about these steps.

1. *Admit It*: Brenda started by asking teachers to share their feelings about what had happened, and refrained from trying to shift the blame onto someone or something else. Instead, she took responsibility for the situation. It is important that the person who violated the trust acknowledge that not only did a violation occur, but also that harm was done.
2. *Apologize*: Brenda apologized, and said that she regretted that she had put teachers in a difficult and divisive situation.
3. *Ask for Forgiveness*: Although forgiveness might be implied, be explicit about asking for it. Brenda said she hoped teachers might forgive her, put the situation in the past, and be willing to trust again.
4. *Amend Your Ways*: Because it restores power to the victims of a breach in trust, offer to make amends, then follow with a request for suggestions. In Brenda's case, she asked the teachers how she could help to restore their trust in her, they requested a change in an upcoming school event, and she made the change.

#### **Strategies for Repairing Trust**

As a leader works through the steps above, a few general strategies will help smooth the process. The first is to treat others with respect and consideration. Give them the benefit of the doubt and try to understand their perspectives. It is especially important to be mindful of language while in the process of restoring trust; keep promises you've made, and address others' problematic behavior tactfully and discretely. For example, even if teachers are acting unprofessionally, refrain from publicly berating them.

At the same time, it is important to have clear boundaries; if there are consequences to people's actions, explain those consequences and put them into practice. Finally, use effective conflict resolution strategies: make "I-statements," use factual, nonjudgmental language, and reflect back your understanding of what the other person is saying.

#### **Whole-School Conversations About Trust**

If there's a schoolwide atmosphere of low trust, rather than a breach of trust between two people, the best resolution involves a series of schoolwide conversations. A solid strengths-based framework can help ensure that the conversations are constructive; one such framework is *Appreciative Inquiry*, which takes a school through a "four-I" cycle of sharing, brainstorming, and planning:

1. *Initiating* a conversation: In this step, the school decides on a focus; for instance, "We need to figure out how to build trust."
2. *Inquiring* about one another's experiences and strengths: Meeting in pairs and small school groups, teachers share their experiences with trusting professional relationships, professional values, and hopes for increased trust at the school.
3. *Imagining* improvements to the school and to professional relationships: In small groups, teachers create concrete representations of their hopes for more trusting relationships at the school. They might use collages, skits, music, etc.
4. *Innovating* a plan of action: Small groups come up with action plans to move the school closer to the visions in the third step.

#### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Think about a time you have been able to restore a trusting relationship after a betrayal or other breach. What did you do? How did "The 4 A's" figure into the process of restoring trust?
2. As a school leader, how might you help teachers in your school restore their relationships after a break in trust?

## Chapter 10 – Becoming a Trustworthy Leader

There are opportunities to build trust every day, as you do the core work of a school leader: uniting the school around a shared vision, acting as a role model and coach, and maintaining a productive environment. This chapter explains how to foster trust while conducting these leadership activities.

### Trustworthy School Leadership

Instructional leaders have five main tasks: visioning, modeling, coaching, managing and mediating. Trust helps principals accomplish these tasks *more* effectively, and these tasks also provide opportunities to foster greater trust. Descriptions of the role trust plays in these tasks are below.

*1. Construct a shared vision:* To transform a school, a vision must be shared by all the stakeholders. That means that, although you may enter a new school with a clear vision for its success, it is important to trust the views of those already there -- solicit opinions from parents and students, analyze data with teachers, collaboratively brainstorm ideas, and ultimately create a unified vision. The best place to start is by looking at the strengths of your school, noting what is already working well, and why. Acknowledging everyone's ideas and celebrating what already works at the school builds confidence and trust in teachers, parents and school leadership.

*2. Model trustworthy behavior:* Even if a school is deeply dysfunctional, with teachers actively trying to undermine the principal, it is still up to that principal to model the behaviors she wants to see from teachers. Try to maintain a respectful tone, even if teachers are violating your expectations of respect. Help trust develop by modeling a positive, trusting, flexible attitude; focusing on problem-solving rather than blame; and sharing decision-making with teachers. *Quiet* leadership, which is "soft on people and hard on projects," personally humble, but tenacious about results, can be very effective. To be consistently trustworthy, you will need some time to reflect on your work, perhaps in writing. Consider building in time at the beginning of the day or during long breaks.

*3. Provide coaching:* As an instructional leader, you can inspire trust by helping teachers reach their professional goals:

- Ask questions that spur a teacher's thinking (e.g., "Which teaching strategy was most successful today? How could you tell? What made it so successful, do you think?")
- Share successful strategies and challenges you faced in your teaching
- Provide feedback on instruction; trust is particularly important here -- in a study, teachers' ratings of the fairness of evaluations depended upon how much they trusted the evaluators

*4. Manage the environment:* Creating and maintaining a school environment provides many opportunities to build trust. For example, a collaborative approach to building the culture and norms conveys trust in teachers, parents and students. It is also helpful to focus conversations on possibilities for success, rather than on blame or control. (For instance, "How can we organize lessons to help students stay focused?" "What are some ways to show that we welcome parents into the school?") Principals who actively build trust, using techniques like these, will find that they need to set fewer rules.

*5. Mediate breakdowns of trust:* When trust breaks down at a school, the principal has three key responsibilities. First, you must model a positive, confident attitude about addressing this issue, conveying the belief that reconciliation is possible. Second, you must take action to address the breach in trust by acting to mediate the conflict yourself. Lastly, you must create structures for addressing future breakdowns in trust and developing staff members' conflict resolution skills.

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What does the concept "trustworthy leadership" mean to you? What are the implications of the concept for your work as principal?
2. What are some of the restrictions, rules or costs you might be able to reduce if your school were a more trusting place? (For example, a school in which faculty members trusted one another might not need many rules around sharing supplies.)

## **THE MAIN IDEA's PD suggestions for *TRUST MATTERS***

### **I. Understanding Trust**

The chart below, adapted from the summaries of Chapters 2 and 8, helps teachers learn about the five facets of trust. You can make copies of the chart, or project it onto a screen. At a meeting with teachers, introduce the five facets; e.g., "Trustworthy people usually demonstrate five qualities, which are also called the Five Facets of Trust. The first one is benevolence, or goodwill, caring about people and wanting what's best for them..." Next, have teachers work in 5 groups, each assigned to a different facet. Have the groups prepare to define and explain the facets, using the filled-in sections of the chart.

Then, lead a larger group discussion in which teachers generate examples of the five facets in action at your school, filling in the last column of the chart. (For instance, "Students talk about how Ms. Wilson always listens to them -- she demonstrates openness.)

Facet of Trust	Definition	Examples	Examples from our school
1. <i>Benevolence</i>	Goodwill, wanting others to succeed, caring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Publicly appreciating hard work</li> <li>✓ Protecting confidentiality</li> <li>✓ Helping people meet their goals</li> </ul>	
2. <i>Honesty</i>	Integrity, truthfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Admitting mistakes and issues</li> <li>✓ Accepting responsibility for problems</li> </ul>	
3. <i>Openness</i>	Willingness to listen and consider others' opinions, feelings and ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Being a good listener</li> <li>✓ Sharing important information</li> <li>✓ Collaborating to solve problems</li> </ul>	
4. <i>Reliability</i>	Dependability, consistency, commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Consistently enforcing rules</li> <li>✓ Fulfilling responsibilities</li> <li>✓ Mediating conflicts fairly</li> </ul>	
5. <i>Competence</i>	Being good at one's job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Having and using professional knowledge</li> <li>✓ Solving problems creatively</li> <li>✓ Helping people meet standards</li> </ul>	

### **II. Introductory Conversations about Trust**

To begin building trust, it is often helpful for teachers to discuss past experiences with it. Below, are questions to use in these conversations. In parentheses after each question is the chapter it connects to. Some of the questions, like 1, 4 and 5, can help launch a large group discussion. More personal questions, like 2 and 3, would work better for partnered or small-group conversations.

1. In the past, have you ever been part of a high-trust school or work environment? If so, what was that like? What were the effects on learning and/or work? What might have been the reasons for the trusting atmosphere? (1: Why Trust Matters)
2. Have confidentiality issues ever come up for you at work? What did you do? What was the result? (2: Defining Trust)
3. Describe a time you and colleague successfully resolved a disagreement (e.g., you were both satisfied with the outcome and came away understanding each other's points of view). What did you learn from the experience and your colleague? (4: Betrayal)
4. What kinds of activities might help build trust *between teachers*? (6: Teachers Trusting One Another)
5. In the past, have you worked with a trustworthy leader? What qualities did she/he have? (10: Becoming a Trustworthy Leader)

### **III. Trust between Different Groups**

A. Trust among Teachers: Typical trust-building activities for teachers involve icebreakers at the beginning of the year and social events like Christmas parties. Those activities do help to build some *personal* trust between teachers, but there are also ways to build *professional* trust: trust in each other's competence and reliability. Professional trust enables teachers to successfully collaborate and problem-solve, increases a schoolwide sense of efficacy, and creates the conditions for a professional learning community. You can measure professional trust with an anonymous survey in which teachers indicate whether they agree or disagree with the following:

1. Most teachers at this school know their subject-areas well.
2. Most teachers at this school know how to teach effectively.
3. Most teachers at this school are able to effectively manage their classrooms.
4. Most teachers at this school are responsible in carrying out their duties.

Professional trust is often influenced by opinions about teaching styles: teachers who rely on traditional approaches may not be initially inclined to trust the competence of a more progressive colleague. One way a principal can build trust across teaching styles is to point out successes teachers are having with their diverse approaches.

Another idea is to encourage the teachers to identify one another's strengths. You might introduce a system of strengths-based peer observations, in which teachers visit one another's classroom and note what is going well. Suggest sample sentence-starters such as:

- I could tell that students were learning when...
- Students were engaged during...
- I'd like to learn more about how you...

**B. Trust between Teachers and Students:** First, to assess student trust in teachers, work with teachers to create a survey measuring this trust in and perceptions about their teachers. Students can circle "Agree," "Disagree" or "Not Sure" next to statements such as:

	Agree/Disagree?	
1. Teachers at this school help students with their problems.		5. Teachers at this school care about us.
2. Teachers at this school are good at listening to students.		6. Teachers at this school are good at teaching.
3. Teachers at this school keep their promises.		7. Teachers at this school enjoy teaching us.
4. Teachers at this school are honest.		8. Teachers at this school talk to us about their lives outside school.
		9. Teachers at this school want us to succeed.

Depending on the survey's results, you and the faculty might decide to work on trust-building *within* classrooms. Use the chart below, from Chapter 7, to talk about the specifics of trusting classrooms. What have teachers observed in classrooms with high trust levels? Low trust levels? Divide teachers into two groups to fill in the blank spaces below describing either a classroom with or without trust.

	Classroom of Community	Classroom of Control
Trust Level	high trust	low trust
What It Looks Like		
General Strategies	relationship-building	extrinsic rewards and punishments
Effect	motivation, learning, connection and achievement rise	motivation, learning and connection decline

Finally, have teachers brainstorm relationship-building strategies for their classrooms. Examples include: talking to students about their interests and activities, sharing appropriately about their own lives, and finding out about and supporting students' personal goals.

**C. Trust between Teachers and Families:** One way to assess current levels of trust is to have teachers bring artifacts of their communication with families to a meeting (e.g., memos sent home, notes from parents, conference notes, etc.) In small groups have teachers examine which of the 5 Facets of Trust are present in their artifacts (benevolence, honesty, reliability, openness, and/or confidence). Then have teachers brainstorm ways to strengthen relationships with families. Have them consider strategies for:

- Communicating across language barriers
- Understanding families' cultures
- Sharing instructional techniques that parents can use at home
- Providing a range of options for families to communicate with teachers and be involved in the classroom
- Addressing students' learning or behavioral issues respectfully and constructively
- Communicating accomplishments and positive news about students, not just when students are in trouble

#### IV. Maintaining and Repairing Trust with Conflict Resolution Skills

Helping teachers develop conflict resolution skills has powerful payoffs for trust at your school. First, conflict resolution skills helps people resolve problems without resorting to public accusations and other tactics that damage trust. Secondly, if trust has been broken, conflict resolution skills enable people to effectively restore it. Below are suggestions for developing conflict-resolution skills.

**A. Conflict-Resolution Skills:** Conflict-resolution skills include I-statements about feelings, reflective listening, and non-judgmental language. Below, you'll find definitions and examples of the skills, which you can use to explain to teachers.

- *I-statements about feelings:* Describing how you feel, rather than accusing the other person of acting wrongly. For example, "I felt upset after our talk in the hallway." Not, "You were very rude to me."
- *Reflective listening:* Listening carefully to the other person, and checking whether you understood what they said by reflecting it back. For example, "I think you're saying that you felt upset after we talked in the hallway."
- *Non-judgmental language:* Avoiding generalizations like "always" and "never," staying true to specific facts, and avoiding labels and insults. For example, "For me it would be better to have conversations about sensitive topics in private, not in the hallway." An example of judgmental language would be: "Didn't you see there were kids around? What's wrong with you?"

Have teachers use the chart below to think about what they would do, and not do, using sample imaginary minor conflicts; e.g., "Charles often borrows Donna's stapler and forgets to return it." The first part of the chart below is filled in, as an example.

	Conflict-Resolution Skills	What to Do	What NOT to Do
Scenario 1	<i>I-statements about feelings, Reflective listening, Non-judgmental language</i>	"Charles, I felt anxious when I looked for my stapler and couldn't find it."	"You have no respect for anyone's belongings!" (Judgmental language)
Scenario 2, etc.			

**B. Steps to Conflict Resolution:** Once teachers have some familiarity with conflict-resolution skills, have them practice the skills by going through the steps for conflict resolution below. That way, when an actual conflict or breach in trust occurs, they will already be familiar with the steps. For these role-plays, you can use the same stapler scenario as above, or generate a new imaginary scenario.

### **Conflict-Resolution Steps**

1. Show respect: Begin by showing respect for the other side by using the person's preferred name and title, making eye contact, etc.
2. Set norms: Set an agreement for norms to follow during the conversation. These norms might include taking turns to speak, being truthful, avoiding generalizations like "always" and "never," and dealing with one issue at a time.
3. First person speaks: This can be the person who brought the issue, the person whose feelings are running the highest, or the person who's in the lower position. Speaking factually and non-judgmentally, the person explains her perspective on the situation and feelings about it and describes any underlying needs that may be relevant (e.g., "I need to feel respected by my coworkers.") She concludes by asking the other person to reflect back an understanding of what she said.
4. Second speaker reflects back what he has just heard, and explains his own perspective, feelings and underlying needs concluding with a request for reflection of what he has just said from the first speaker.
5. Continue steps 3 and 4 until the speakers reach a mutual understanding of each other's needs within the situation.
6. The speakers problem-solve about restoring the relationship. Each speaker describes the actions s/he would like to see, and they work together to find mutually acceptable solutions. Then they commit to a solution that will restore their relationship.