

Core Beliefs Activity

This “4 Corners” activity was originally developed for the Iowa Parent Information Resource Center. This is a powerful activity for participants and usually results in several “ah-ha” moments. To allow participants to experience these “ah-ha” moments, consider the following:

- Facilitate a dialogue among participants.
 - Practice a healthy wait time to allow dialogue to happen
 - Your voice in the exercise shouldn’t be the loudest. Your voice should be used to share the research and summarize what has been shared.
1. Have participants complete the Core Beliefs survey at the beginning of the presentation—prior to sharing any information about Family Engagement. The form to use with participants is included in this document. There are 2 forms on the page and these should be cut in half. Instruct participants to answer all 4 questions by indicating how much they agree with each of the statements. Tell them to answer as honestly as they can and that their responses will be completely anonymous. They should not put their name on the paper. When they are finished, have them fold their paper in half and place it in the center of the table. Make sure to hang the attached signs (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) in the 4 corners of the room before you start your presentation.
 2. When you are ready for the activity, have participants take one of the completed Core Belief surveys and stand up. Instruct them to trade papers 5 times. Why 5 times? There is nothing magic about switching 5 times, but this does ensure that no one has their own paper and no one knows whose paper they have. This ensures anonymity. In addition, it’s fun for participants to engage with the other participants while they switch papers.
 3. Once everyone has exchanged papers explain that this activity is a social barometer exercise to get a sense of where people stand related to the Core Beliefs. The activity is also called “voting with your feet”.
 4. Tell participants that you will read each of the Core Belief statements at a time and they should stand under the sign (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) that matches the response on the survey they have in their hand. It is important to remind participants that we know where they are standing does not necessarily represent how they feel about each Core Belief. Based on the group, you may need to say this before you discuss each Core Belief. It is also important to let participants know that while the activity is meant to be anonymous many participants feel the need to self-disclose how they responded on the survey and why they responded this way. While self-disclosure is not necessary or expected, make sure participants are not judged negatively when they do decide to share how they feel or explain the reasoning behind their responses.



5. After everyone has moved to their corner or area of the room, open it up for discussion by using these prompts:
 - a. What do you notice as you look around the room?
 - b. Why might this Core Belief be hard to accept?
 - c. Why might someone strongly agree or strongly disagree with this statement?
 - d. Why is it important to hold this Core Belief?
6. Use the following talking points to guide the discussion for each of the Core Beliefs.
 - **Core Belief 1**—It is vital for educators to understand that the families who send their children to school each day want their children to succeed in school and in life. Yes, families may say or do things that lead us to wonder if they respect the importance of education. These actions and behaviors, however, often are triggered by other stressful factors in parents' lives, and do not reflect their innermost feelings.
 - **Core Belief 2**—Regardless of how little formal education parents may have or what language they speak, all parents can contribute to their children's learning. Parents' knowledge, talents, and experiences in life give them plenty of capacity for assisting their children with school skills. School staff, however, may need to help parents understand and use that capacity. All parents have "funds of knowledge" about their children and the community that should be respected and tapped by school staff. (Moll, Amanti, Neffi and Gonzalez, 1992). The expression, "parents are their children's first teachers," is so widely used it is almost a cliché. If we believe it, we should view and treat parents as the experts that they are. This Core Belief ensures that we believe all adults can learn just as we should believe all children can learn.
 - **Core Belief 3**—Every person who is interested in supporting a child's development should have equal status, value and responsibility. That means starting from the premise that everyone has something to offer and that everyone should get something positive out of the relationship. In contrast to unbalanced power relationships, Richard Elmore suggests a principle of reciprocity. Families have skills but perhaps not the same skills as the professionals. The skills families have are just as important. Your staff has special skills. It's the coming together and honoring and validating the skills of both groups that's important. When you start to let families know that you consider them capable, they will rise to the occasion.
 - **Core Belief 4**—To create a climate and culture of partnership with families that support student learning, strong leadership is essential from both the principal and teachers. The principal plays the key role, but teachers also have to be advocates for family engagement. Many families see schools as powerful and forbidding institutions. Reaching out to parents is easier for educators than it is for families "reaching in" to teachers and other staff. The principal and teachers must take the first step, especially when parents already feel intimidated by school staff. Certainly, there is a responsibility on both sides, and parents must continue to connect with teachers and other school staff on behalf of their children.

Beliefs Survey

How much do you agree with the following statements? Please circle 1 answer for each statement.
Answer as honestly as you can. Your responses will be completely anonymous.

Fold your paper in half when you are finished.

All families have hopes and dreams for their children and want the best for them.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
All families have the capacity to support their children's learning.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Families and school staff should be equal partners.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The responsibility for building and sustaining partnerships between school, home, and the community rests primarily with school staff, especially school leaders.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree



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Totalmente de acuerdo

**Strongly
Agree**

Tout à fait d'accord

De acuerdo

Agree

D'accord

En desacuerdo

Disagree

Pas d'accord

Totalmente en desacuerdo

**Strongly
Disagree**

Fortement en désaccord

Encuesta de creencias

¿Qué tan de acuerdo está con las siguientes afirmaciones? Encierre en un círculo 1 respuesta para cada declaración. Responda lo más honestamente que pueda. Sus respuestas serán completamente anónimas.

Doble el papel por la mitad cuando haya terminado.

Todas las familias tienen sueños para sus hijos y quieren lo mejor para ellos.	Totalmente en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	De acuerdo	Totalmente de acuerdo
Todas las familias tienen la capacidad de apoyar el aprendizaje de sus hijos.	Totalmente en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	De acuerdo	Totalmente de acuerdo
Las familias y el personal de la escuela/programa deben ser socios iguales.	Totalmente en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	De acuerdo	Totalmente de acuerdo
La responsabilidad de construir y mantener las asociaciones/conexiones entre la escuela, el hogar, y la comunidad descansa sobre los hombros del personal escolar, especialmente en los líderes escolares.	Totalmente en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	De acuerdo	Totalmente de acuerdo



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Enquête sur les croyances

Dans quelle mesure êtes-vous d'accord avec les énoncés suivants? Veuillez encrer 1 réponse pour chaque déclaration. Répondez aussi honnêtement que possible. Vos réponses seront totalement anonymes.

Pliez votre papier en deux lorsque vous avez terminé.

Toutes les familles ont des rêves pour leurs enfants et veulent le meilleur pour eux.	Fortement en désaccord	Pas d'accord	D'accord	Tout à fait d'accord
Toutes les familles ont la capacité de soutenir l'apprentissage de leurs enfants.	Fortement en désaccord	Pas d'accord	D'accord	Tout à fait d'accord
Les familles et le personnel de l'école ou du programme devraient être des partenaires égaux.	Fortement en désaccord	Pas d'accord	D'accord	Tout à fait d'accord
La responsabilité d'établir et de maintenir des partenariats entre l'école, la maison et la communauté incombe principalement au personnel de l'école, en particulier aux chefs d'établissement.	Fortement en désaccord	Pas d'accord	D'accord	Tout à fait d'accord



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