



REFRAMING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT





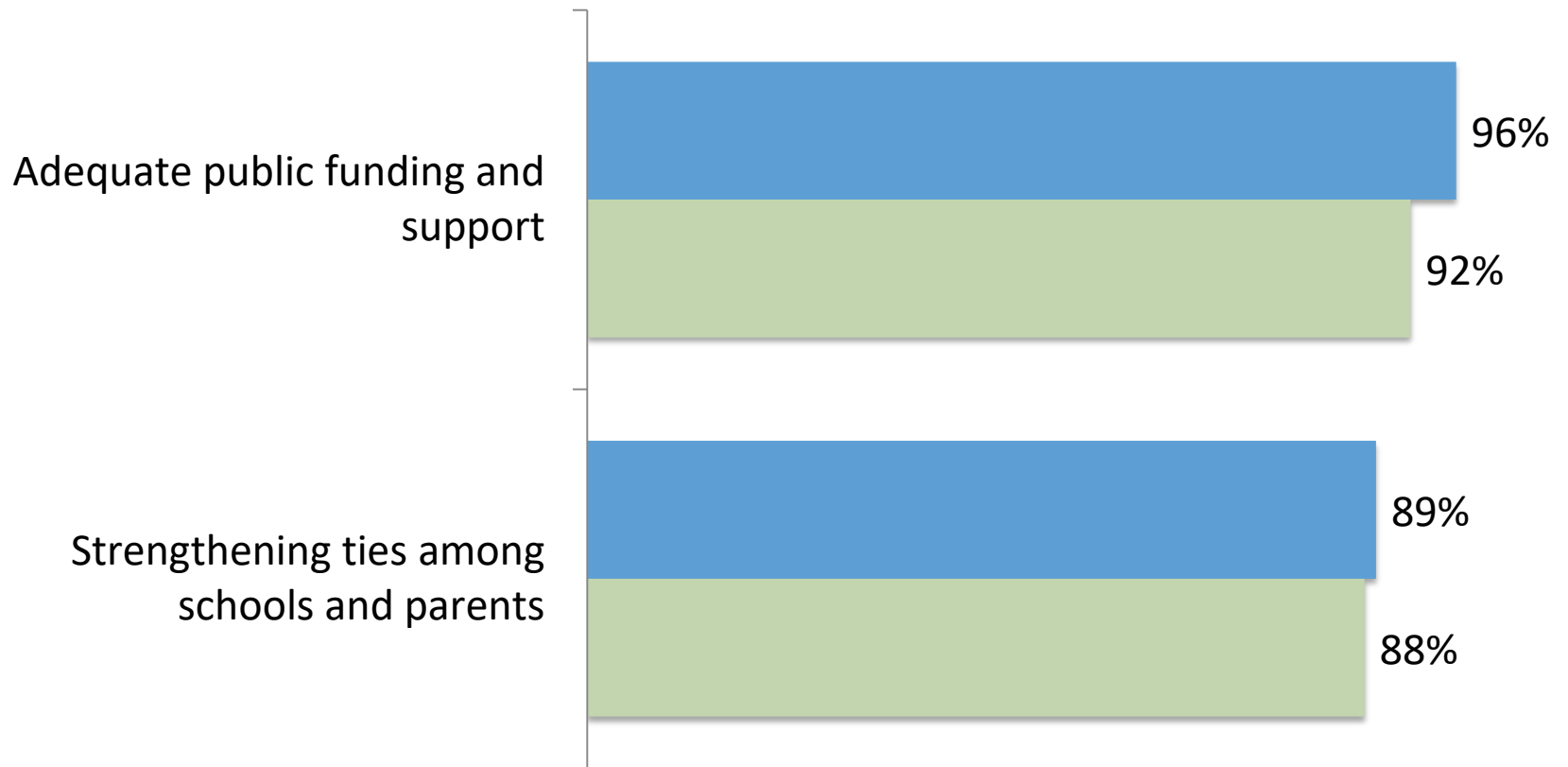
1. Challenges in Engaging Families
2. Seven Shifts to Partner with Families
3. How the Shifts Are Embedded in *Keep Connected*

Prototype site, Georgetown, TX



Importance to Student Success

“Very important” for improving student achievement



■ Principals ■ Teachers

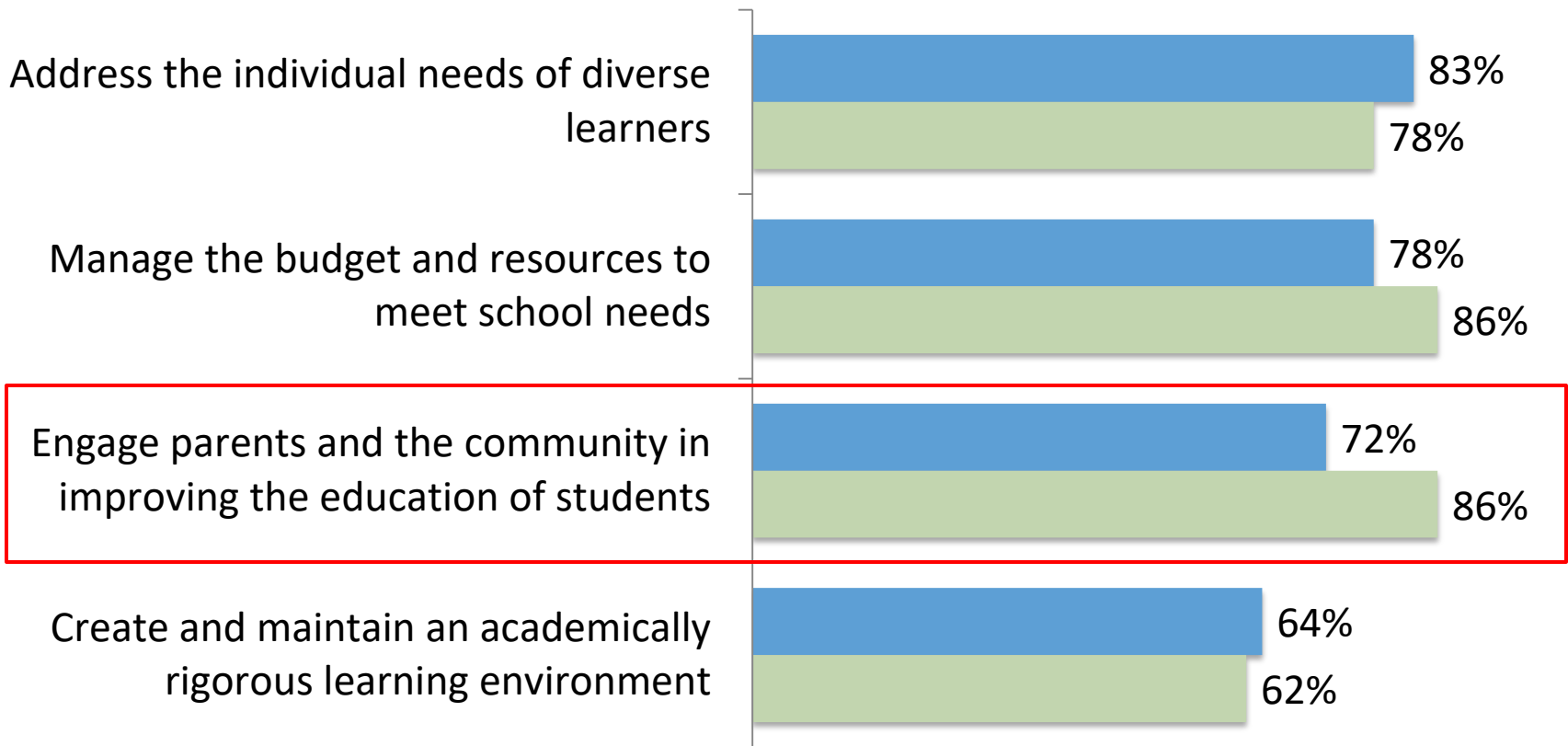
*MetLife Survey of the American Teacher:
Collaborating for Student Success, Pt. 2 (2009).*

Sample: 500 principals; 1,000 teachers.



A Top Challenge for Principals, Teachers

“Challenging” or “very challenging”



■ Principals ■ Teachers

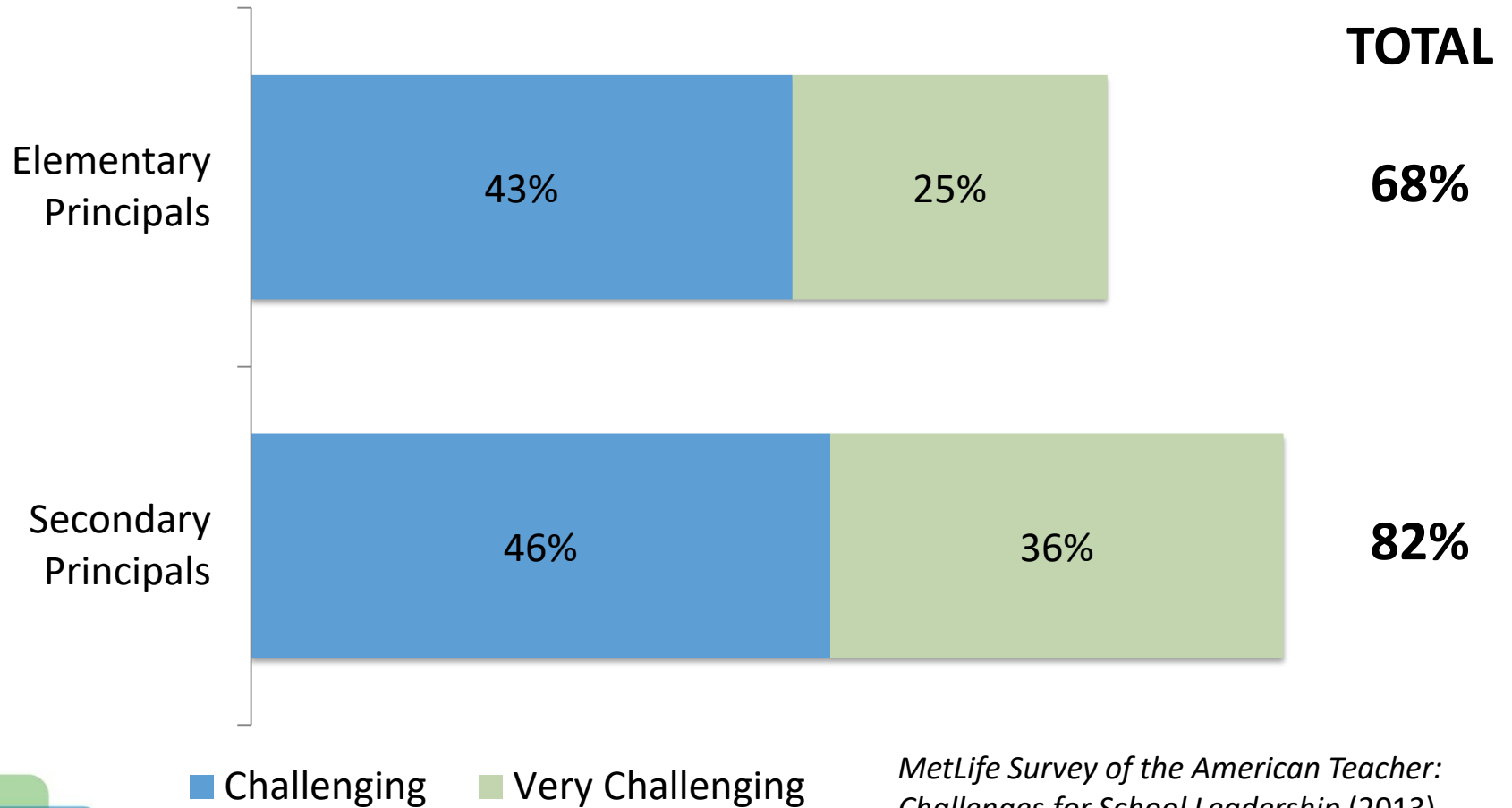
MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership (2013).

Sample: 1,000 teachers; 500 principals.



Principals: Elementary vs. Secondary

How challenging? Engage parents and the community in improving the education of students.



■ Challenging ■ Very Challenging

MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership (2013).

Sample: 1,000 teachers; 500 principals.



- 81 percent of teachers say **lack of skills reinforcement at home** is a big challenge when trying to integrate SEL into teaching.
- 66 percent identify it as a very big challenge.

Students not learning social and emotional skills at home was among teacher's top reasons to teach SEL in school.

N = 600 teachers

Bridgeland, J., Bruce, M., Hariharan, A. (2013). The missing piece: A national teacher survey on how social and emotional learning can empower children and transform schools. Chicago: CASEL.



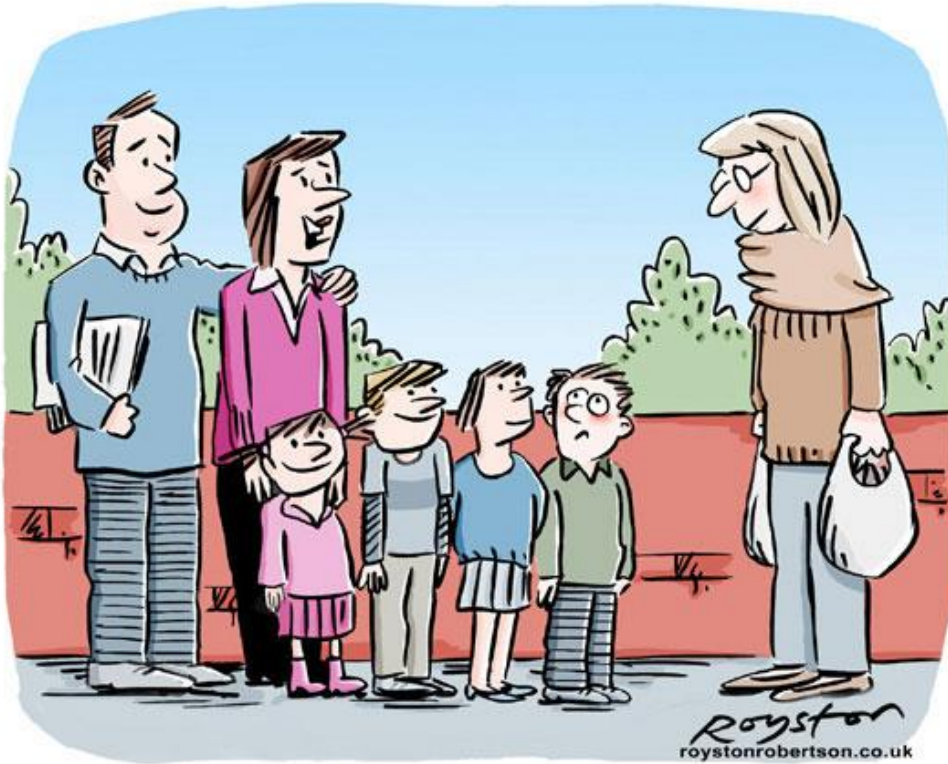
What Challenges Do You Experience?

What we hear a lot . . .

- A. Families are too busy
- B. Families don't think they need help
- C. Transportations and logistics
- D. Other things are higher priorities



But Perhaps There's Something Else



“This is our daughter, my son from my first marriage, John’s daughter from his second marriage, and I’ve no idea who the one on the end is.”

The programs and opportunities we offer may not be relevant to—or may even be off-putting to—today’s diverse families.

Who's Really “Hard to Reach”

“[There is a] fundamental disconnect between what is designed and offered and what families want and need. . . . In other words, it is our institutions and the programs, practices, and policies that school personnel design that are ‘hard to reach,’ not the families.”



Mapp, K. L., & Hong, S. (2010). Debunking the myth of the hard-to-reach parent. In S. L. Christenson & A. L. Reschly (Eds.), *Handbook of school-family partnerships* (pp. 345–360). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Practical: Time, schedule, transportation
- Attitudes & expectations
 - Perceived stigma: Being judged, labeled, diagnosed
 - Blame: Kids' problems are their parents' fault
 - Loss of privacy
 - Fear of consequences
 - Embarrassment, sense of failure, competition
 - A sense of obligation to reciprocate

Attree, P. (2005). Parenting support in the context of poverty: A meta-synthesis of the qualitative evidence. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 13(4), 330–337.





How might we shape family

engagement to capitalize on families' strengths and their most powerful role in helping kids succeed?

A Focusing Question





Prototype site, Georgetown, TX

1. Challenges in Engaging Families
2. Seven Shifts to Partner with Families
 - The shifts
 - How they are embedded
 - Your reflection

Reframing Our Emphases: 7 Shifts

Deficits, Risks



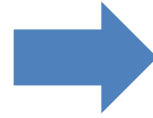
Strengths, Resilience

Recruit Families



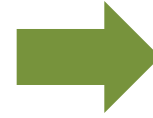
Build Relationships

Our Agenda



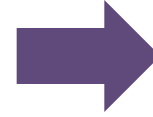
Their Agenda

Parenting Skills



Family Relationships

Early Childhood



Through Transitions

On their Own



Connected Communities

Serving Families



Empowering Families

7 Shifts: Following Along

As we introduce each shift . . .

- What's the "default" mindset for your organization/school
- Jot down examples
- Give overall "rating"
- Note: "Emphasis," not "either/or"

7 Shifts: Where Is Yo

The 7 shifts of family engagement highlight critical oppo
As you reflect on your school or organization's default t

FROM AN EMPHASIS ON . . .

1. Deficits, Risks, or Dysfunction in Families

- Talk about how families fail their kids
- Offer programs focused only on risks
- Bring in experts to fix problems

2. Recruiting Families to Participate

- We know what families need
- Communication is primarily one way
- If they don't show up, they don't care

3. Advancing Our Organization's Agenda

- Focus on what we need families to do
- Equate "engagement" with level of support for organization's programs

4. Building Parenting Skills

- Teach parents to manage behaviors
- Focus on proven ways to get results
- Parents are responsible for what kids do

5. Early Childhood as Primary Opportunity

- Family programs are "early childhood" programs
- Assume families won't show up later

6. Individual Families on their Own

- Focus on helping individual families
- Few chances for families to connect
- Families need experts, not p



Shift #1: A Narrative of Families in Crisis



- Structure and place in society = destiny
- Risks, deficits, dysfunction
- We (professionals) know what they need to do
- It's private—not my job
- Work around, compensate

“Most studies . . . tended to dismiss the family as hopelessly dysfunctional and to seek positive extrafamilial resources to counter the negative impact. Thus, **families were seen to contribute to risk, but not to resilience.**”

— Froma Walsh



Walsh, F. (2006). *Strengthening family resilience* (2nd edition). New York: Guilford.

What We Hear

- Families are broken, dysfunctional
- 64% of parents say: Families have declined

What We Experience

- Families are the most important part of life
- 75% of adults say: They are very satisfied with family

In Summary

Today's families are really messed up.

Nothing is more important to me than my family.



Adaptability: A Core Family Strength

“Families still matter greatly, and families can and do tend to perform well those functions that are particularly relevant to the lives of children, even in different social and historical contexts, household arrangements, and living conditions.”



Bengston, V. L., Biblarz, T. J., & Roberts, R. E. L. (2002). *How families still matter: A longitudinal study of youth in two generations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- All families have strengths AND challenges
 - Both are welcomed
 - Avoid the “expert trap”
- Starting with strengths
 - Taps strengths as a resource for growth
 - Builds self-efficacy, confidence
 - A foundation for relationships
 - Builds trust (to tackle challenges)
- Transition: A challenge that’s not a point of embarrassment or shame



Shift #2: Build Relationships with Families

Recruit Families



Build Relationships

Do we start with?

- We know things you need to know
- If parents would just . . .
- What do you need or worry about so we can “program to” (or fix) them

What if we started with . . . ?

- “Inviting” families to be part
- What are your hopes, dreams, struggles, gifts? What is life like for you?
- How might we learn from each other, tell each other our stories?
- Goals: Build trust, confidence; give voice; tap their own strengths, priorities

IS “RECRUIT” THE RIGHT WORD?

to enlist for military service; to furnish or replenish with a fresh supply;
to attempt to enroll or enlist.



Sought practitioners who . . .

- Gave enough time to talk it out
- Had a trusting relationship with parent
- Validated parents' concerns
- Showed interest in the family's situation

Sayal, K., Tischler, V., Coope, C., Robotham, S. Ashworth, M., Day, C., Tylee, A., & Simonoff, E. (2010). Parental help-seeking in primary care for child and adolescent mental health concerns: Qualitative study. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 197, 476–481.



Our Agenda

What's in it for us . . .

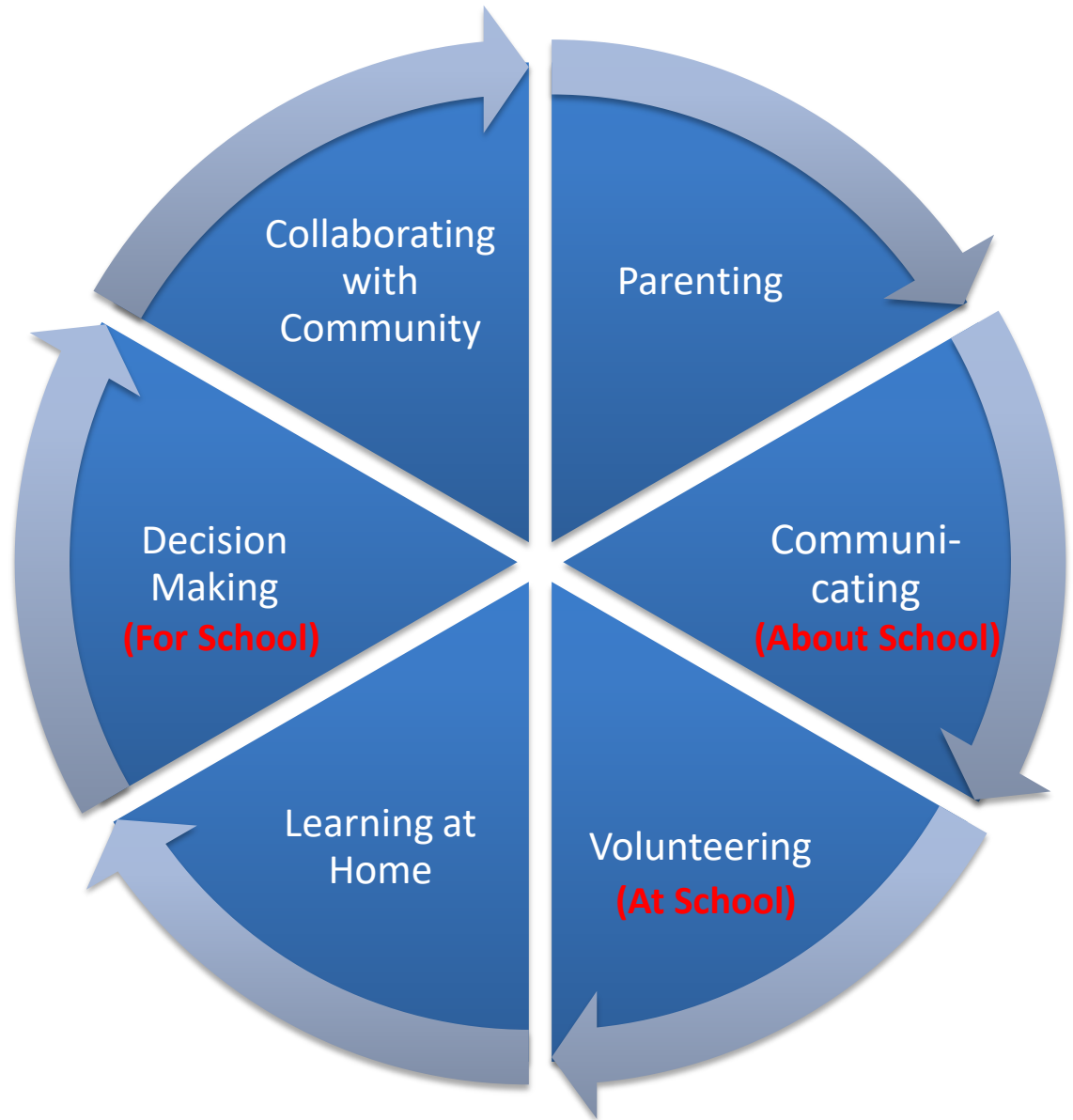
Most strategies we use focus on how parents support our organization's mission (school, youth program, congregation)



Joyce Epstein

Types of Parent Involvement

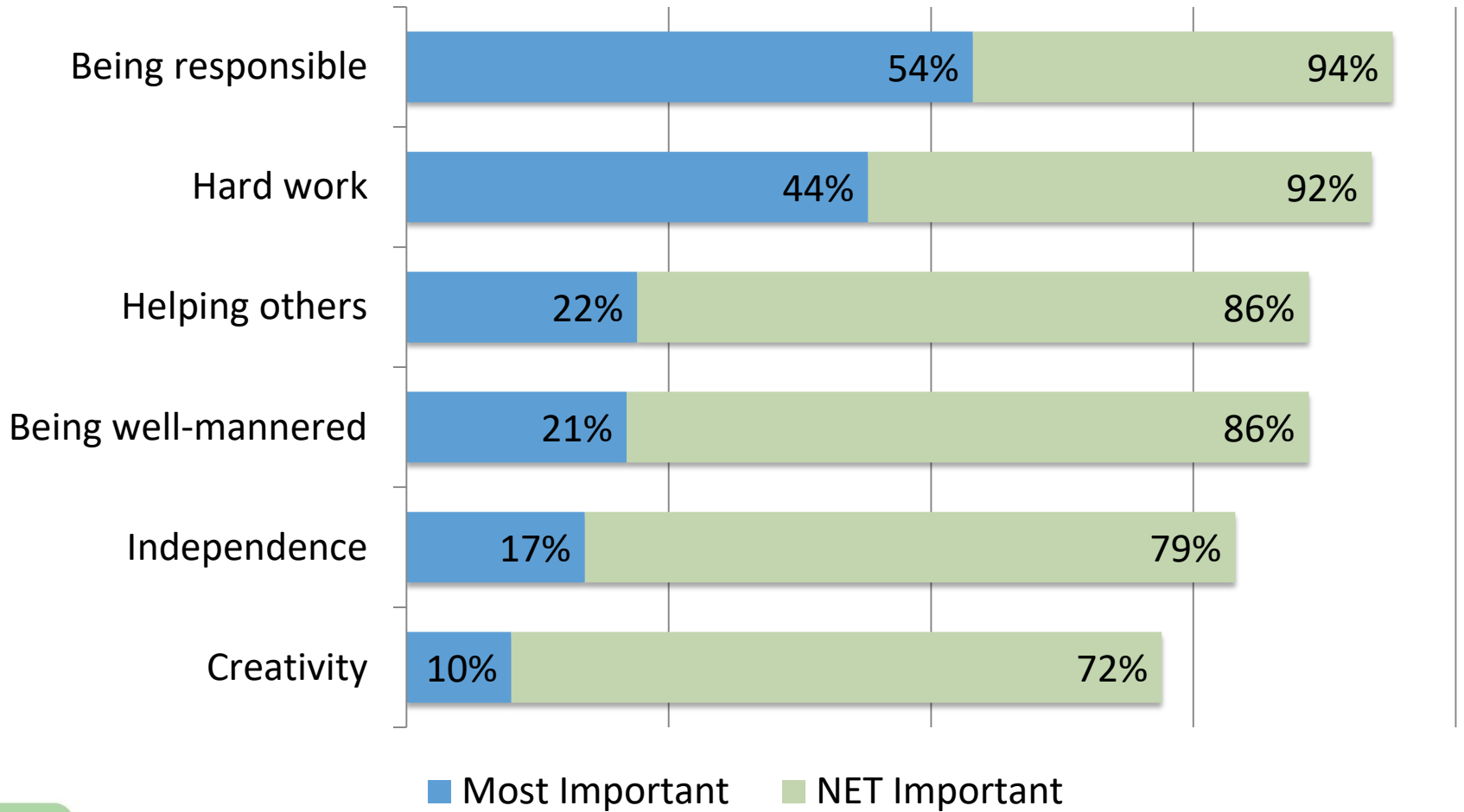
Whose is the underlying agenda?
Who's driving it?



Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Sheldon, S. B., et al. (2009). *School, family, and community partnership: Your handbook for action (3rd Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.



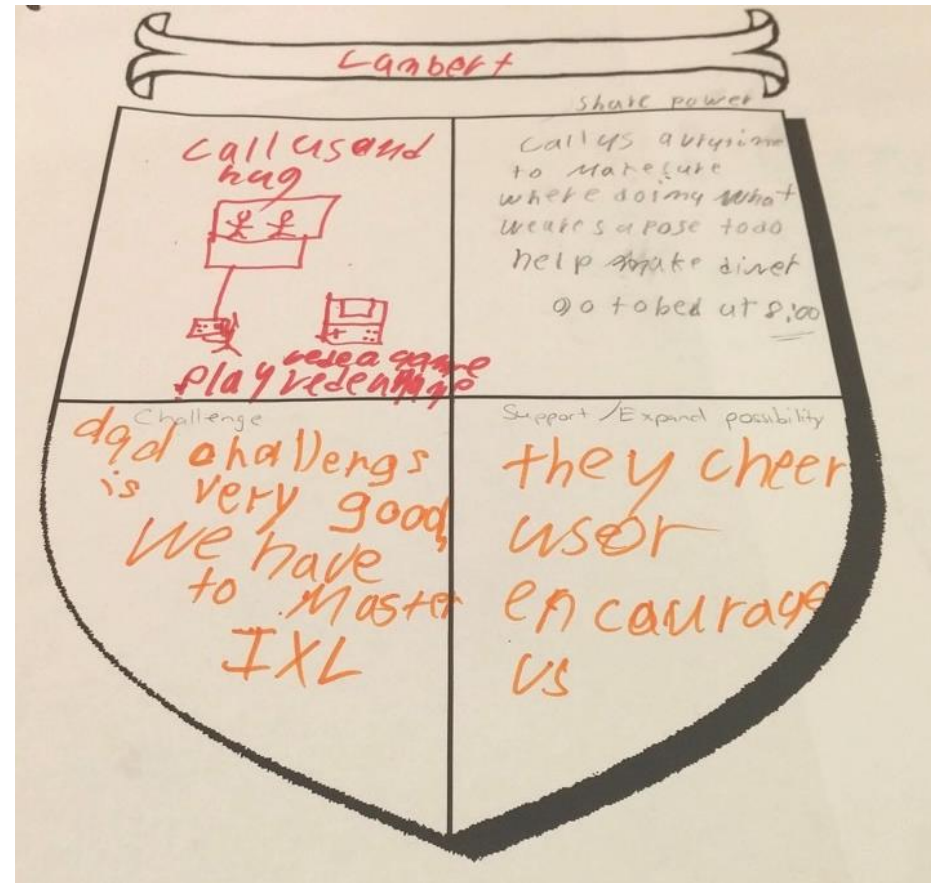
What Are Parents' Priorities?



Pew Research Center (2014). Families may differ, but they share common values on parenting.



- Worry about their child “growing up” or “losing my child” when they become a teen
- A priority: To stay connected, even as kids grow up



Family Pledge to Keep Connected

Hidden alignment

Our premise: Families' greatest contributions to your program, school, or organization's goals for children and youth lies in being as strong and resilient a family as it can be.

If that's true, what does it mean for why and how you seek to engage families?

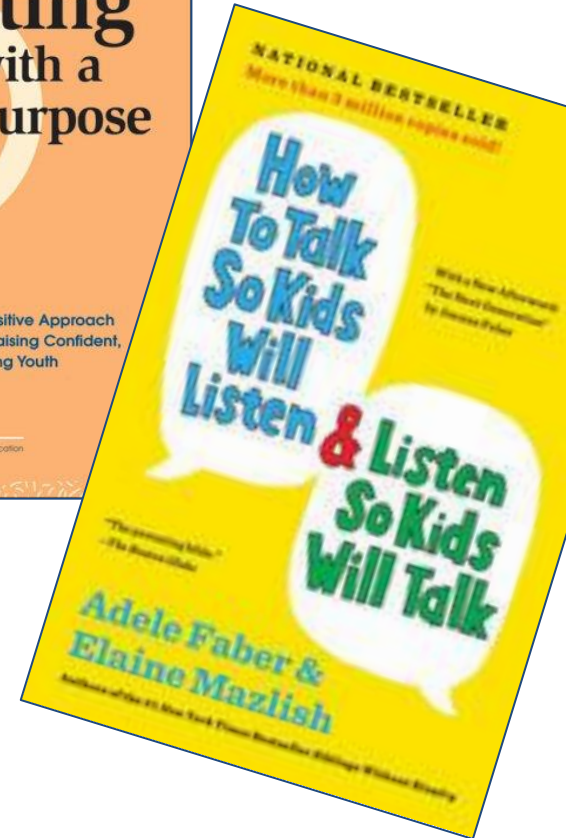
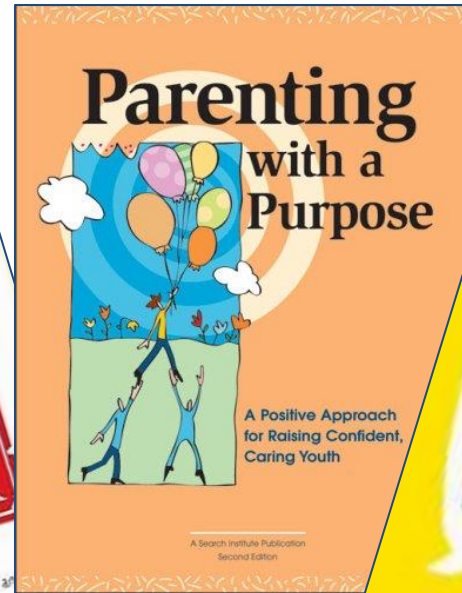
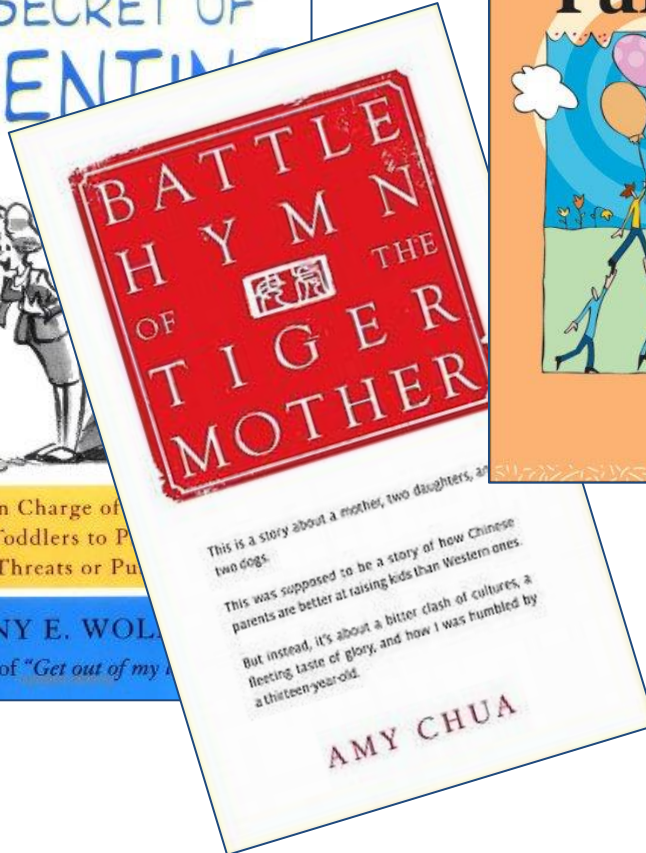
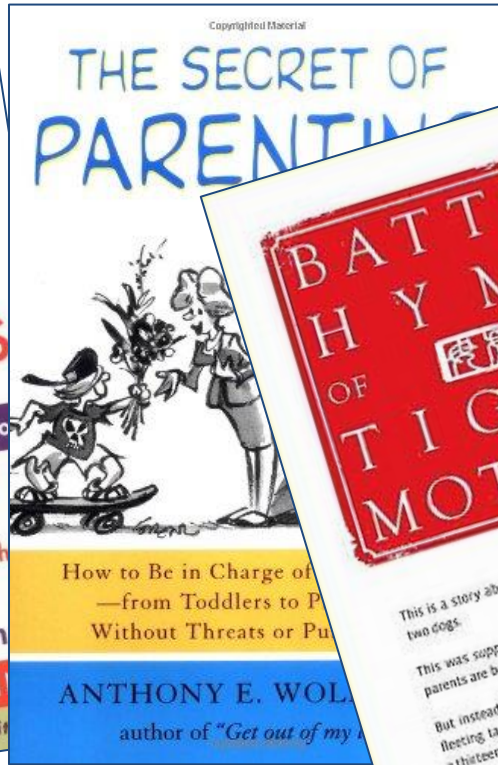
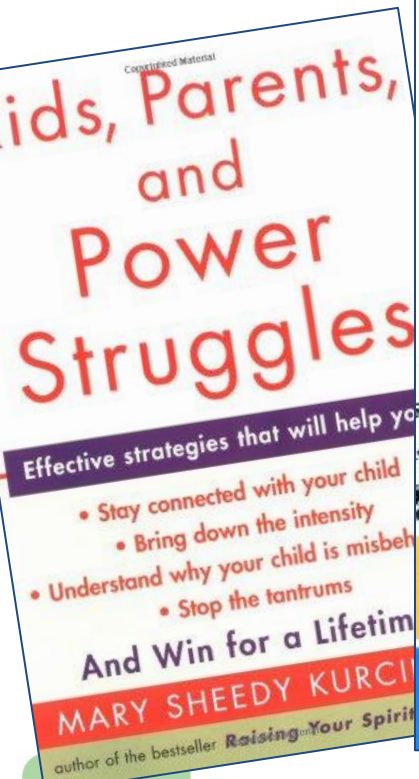


Shift #4: Family Relationships

Parenting Skills



Family Relationships



“Many current approaches fail to take into account the **relationship aspect of parenting**. . . . Parenting theories tend to focus on behavioral, cognitive, or emotional domains, with **limited attention to the interpersonal, relational aspects**.”



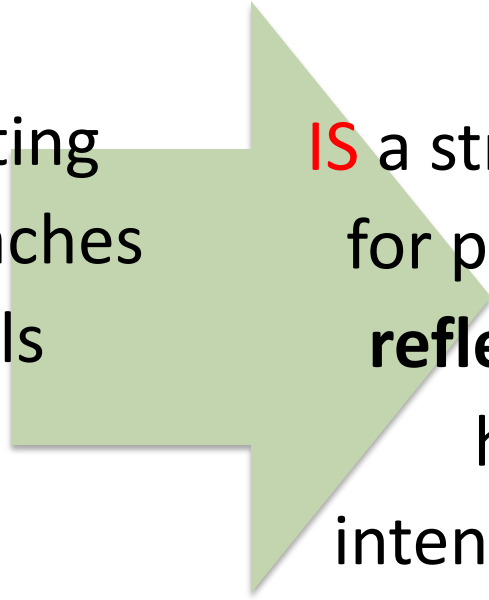
Tuttle, A. R., Knudson-Martin, C., & Kim, L. (2012). Parenting as relationship: a framework for assessment and practice. *Family Process*, 51(1), 73–89.





“It was just a nice way to pause and think through some things about your relationships that you probably never bother to do.”
- Parent, Austin, MN

IS NOT a parenting program that teaches parenting skills



IS a structured opportunity for parents and youth to **reflect on and practice** how to be more intentional in their family relationships





Express Care



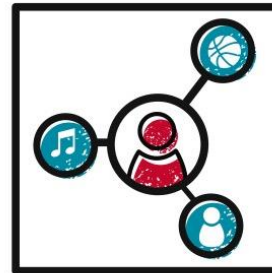
**Challenge
Growth**



**Provide
Support**



Share Power



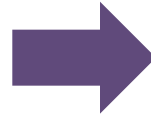
**Expand
Possibilities**

A double benefit . . .

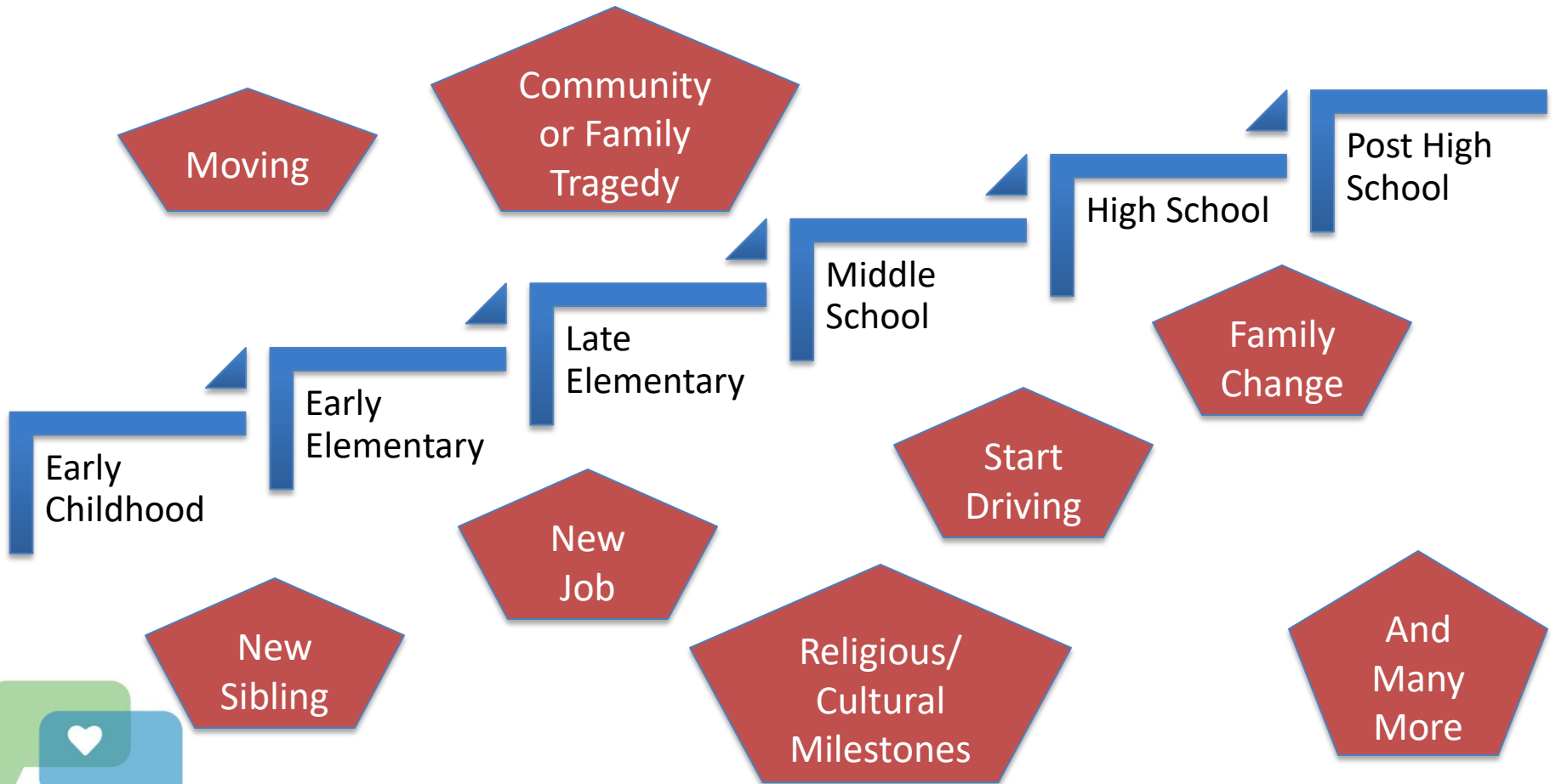
1. Families want strong relationships
2. Strong family relationships are foundational for many youth outcomes

Shift #5: Parenting Doesn't Stop at 6

Early Childhood



Through Transitions





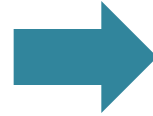
“Being able to continue that momentum for **healthy, strong habits at the middle school age** and hopefully build foundations that will carry into high school is just critically important. There’s a big gap there. **It’s a missing service.**”

– Keep Connected facilitator



#SearchConnected

On their Own



Connected Communities

“Social poverty—social isolation and a lack of easy access to help—had become rampant, regardless of families’ socioeconomic status. To a large extent, help had become a commodity that people buy, not what they do.”



— Gary Melton (2010)

Melton, G. B. (2010). Angels (and neighbors) watching over us: Child safety and family support in an age of alienation. *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 80(1), 89–95.



Web of Relationships: Spokes or Network?



Central “expert” as key resource

Community, culture as key resource



1

Families build trust, connections and a shared foundation (across differences)

2

Families come to see each other as friends and trustworthy sources of advice

3

Families learn about opportunities in the community (from peers who value them)

“I enjoyed getting to be closer to my family and closer to other families.”

— Youth

“To hear other parents having the same struggles...you can let your hair down and learn from each other.”

- Parent, Durham, NC



Serving Families



Empowering Families

Three alternate ways of thinking about community connections:

- Informal supports for families
- Formal supports for families
- Family contributions to communities

Which of these matters most for youth well-being?

1. Contributions

2. Informal

3. Formal



- Parent and youth voice throughout
- Not fully developed:
 - Opportunities for parents to facilitate (after experiencing the series and receiving training)
 - Follow-up opportunities based on family priorities, interests, passions
 - Community building/fellowship
 - Engaging others
 - Family community action and service to others
 - Learning opportunities

