

FAMILIES AS PARTNERS: RELATIONAL INTELLIGENCE GUIDE



Integrated Support Strategies

Utilizing Relational Intelligence Skills for Strong Family Partnerships

Building strong family partnerships requires translating daily empathy into intentional, observable relational habits during quick drop-off and pickup touch points. This guide outlines how school and afterschool staff can apply the **4 Core Relational Intelligence** skills to build deep trust and belonging with parents and caregivers.

1. VALUE MINING PARENT/CAREGIVER PARTNERING

The Concept: Looking beyond surface complaints or quick banter to uncover what a family deeply treasures, prioritizes, or values for their child.

What It Looks Like: Listening through a family's stress or concern without getting defensive, actively searching for the underlying care or priority behind their words.

What It Sounds Like:

- "It sounds like making sure Maya feels included during group games is super important to you. I really appreciate you sharing that priority with me."
- "I hear how much you value routine and structure after school—that helps us align our team with what works best for him at home."

2. CURIOSITY FIRST PARENT/CAREGIVER PARTNERING

The Concept: De-centering adult program authority by stepping into a learner role and recognizing the parent as the true expert on their child.

What It Looks Like: Asking open-ended questions about home strategies instead of lecturing parents about program rules or behavior issues.

What It Sounds Like:

- "You know Leo better than anyone. What strategies work best at home when he's feeling overwhelmed like he was today?"
- "Jordan mentioned he's been super excited about building lately! What are some things he loves doing at home that we could bring into our program?"

3. CONNECT ON EMOTION PARENT/CAREGIVER PARTNERING

The Concept: Validating a parent's underlying feeling (stress, fatigue, protective, anxiety) before explaining program policies or logistics.

What It Looks Like: Praising before defending a rule when a parent seems upset, connecting first on the shared human emotion behind the situation.

What It Sounds Like:

- I can hear how exhausting and stressful your workday was before you even got to pickup. Let's get this sign-out sorted out quickly for you.

4. STEADY PRESENCE PARENT/CAREGIVER PARTNERING)

The Concept: Forging long-term trust through proactive and routine micro-touchpoints rather than only reaching out when a behavioral problem occurs.

What It Looks Like: Stepping away from sign-out clipboards, maintaining direct eye contact, noticing mood shifts, and following up on family details.

What It Sounds Like:

- "Hey Mrs. Rerval, how did your daughter's soccer tournament go over the weekend?"
- "I noticed you seemed super rushed at drop-off this morning—I just wanted to let you know Sam had a great day!"

RELATIONAL INTELLIGENCE FAMILY COMMUNICATION CHEAT SHEET

Skill	Core Shift with Families	Go-To Opening Phrase
1. Value Mining	Complaint → Core Family Priority	"It sounds like [value] is super important to your family..."
2. Curiosity First	Program Expert → Family Learner	"You know [Youth] best. What works well at home when..."
3. Connect on Emotion	Policy Defense → Emotional Validation	"I can hear how frustrating/stressful that situation was..."
4. Steady Presence	Crisis-Only → Daily Micro-Touchpoints	"I remembered you mentioned [detail] yesterday, how did that go?"