Collaborative Parent Conversations:

Simple Steps to Go From Lines to Loops





ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Goals for Today

- Build an understanding of the conditions necessary for strong communication between home and school.
- Explore strategies for ensuring communication is accessible, equitable and strengths-based.
- Gain tips for creating strong and sustained two-way communication habits.
- Understand ways to repair communication when things don't go as planned.
- Create communication loops that bring in the whole community.

ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K













ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K



ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

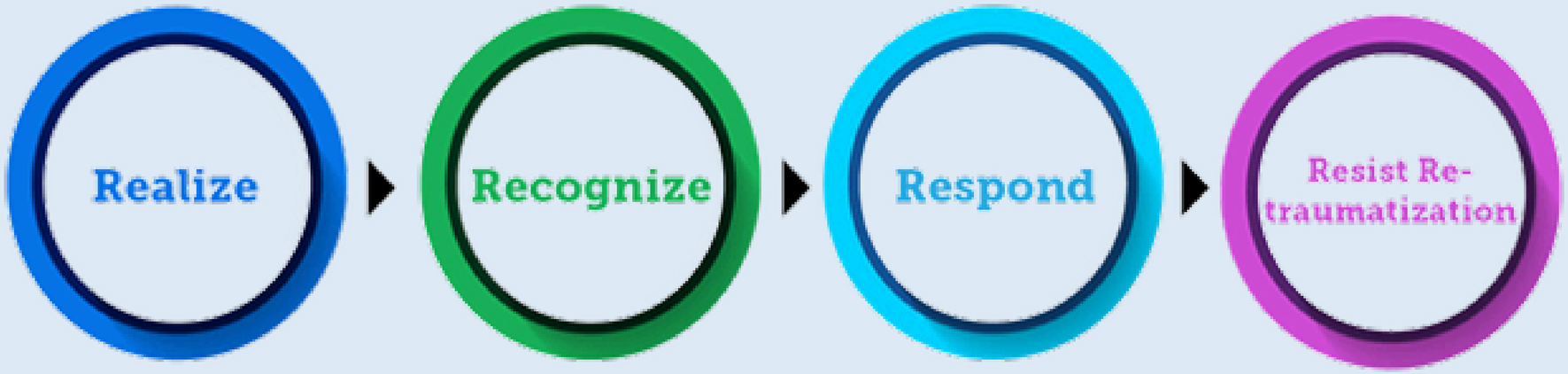
Positive Foundations

TOSS OUT THE ROPE



ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

The Four Rs of Trauma-Informed Care



Realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential paths for recovery

Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system

Respond by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices

Resist re-traumatization of children, as well as the adults who care for them

This figure is adapted from: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). SAMHSA's concept of trauma and Guidance for a trauma-informed approach. HHS publication no. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Tip 1: Positive Interactions

Pathway to a Positive Call

Identify

Hello, it's _____ from [name of school].



Assure

No one is sick, hurt or in trouble. I'm calling with good news/a happy update.



Share

Let them know something positive you noticed about their child. Be specific. Nothing is too small- a moment of kindness, helpfulness, trying something new, a bright spot in learning...



Remember

You called to give a positive update. Resist the urge to bring up any challenges you may be experiencing with this student.



Thank

Keep the call quick and to the "positive point." Thank them for their time and wish them a nice rest of their day.



Tip 2: Strengths-Based Communication

Always lead with strengths-based communication.

From this...	To This!
You need to respond to my messages more quickly.	Staying connected really helps us support your child — let's figure out the best way to communicate so it's easy for both of us.
Parents are not allowed in the classroom without an appointment.	We love having families involved — let's find a time that works for both of us so we can connect in a way that supports your child's learning.
Your child is a distraction to other students.	Your child is very social and loves connecting with peers — we're working on helping them find the right moments for that.
She’s not trying. She just gives up.	When tasks feel difficult, she sometimes needs extra encouragement to keep going. We're working on building her confidence and persistence.

Keep it Strengths-Based

Starters that shut parents down...	Starters that open the door...
You need to...	We'd love to...
Your child can't...	Your child is working on...
We've been having problems with...	We've been noticing...
You should now that...	We wanted to share...
The problem is...	Here's where we'd love your input...
We tried everything and...	We have some ideas and would love to hear yours...

ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Tip 3:
Scaffold
the “Ask”

Scaffold

Parents will feel supported and not overwhelmed

If you are asking a family to do something, first ask yourself:



Is this doable? Does it leverage a families strengths?

Does the family have the necessary:



Supplies or resources?



Time?



Transportation?



Background knowledge?



Skills?



Language support?

ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Tip 4:
Be
Transparent

Transparency Is Key

When asking families to share information with us:

- Be clear on purpose.
- State needed confidentiality rules.
- Say what the information is going to be used for.
- Let them know your role.
- Set clear expectations.



ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Positioning Yourself as a Partner

THE ROPE IS PICKED UP



ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Tip 1:
Make Yourself Approachable

Make Yourself Approachable

Highlight points of connection. What's your "go-to connection?"



ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Tip 2: Communication Expectations

Set Clear Communication Expectations

Things to consider as you set clear communication expectations in both directions:

Contact Information: Contact preferences for each person

Communication Routing: Who to contact and when? For urgent matters? For regular communications?

Language & Accessibility: Preferred language for written communication, calls, or meetings. Interpreter support? Additional accessibility needs?

Communication Preferences and Partnership: What kinds of communication are most important to you? What's the easiest way for you to reach out to us? Are there any cultural practices, traditions or values you'd like us to keep in mind? Anything else you'd like us to know to best support your family?

Tip 3: Partnership Purpose

Tell and Show Why Their Partnership Matters

Let families know just how much their partnership matters:

When we partner:

Your child will be set up to really thrive in school. Research shows that when we stay connected children are more likely to earn higher grades, build stronger skills, and feel confident as learners. (Jeynes, 2005, 2012)

I can be a more effective teacher for your child. You're the expert on your child. When you share what motivates them, what they struggle with, and what matters to your family, I can make my teaching more personal and impactful.

Your child will become an even stronger... (reader). When I know what's happening at home and you know what we're working on in class, we can surround your child with consistent reading support, That makes a real difference in early literacy. (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002)

Get WISE

W I S E

Communication Protocol for Building and Maintaining Strong Partnerships with Families

Research shows that meaningful conversations happen when educators create genuine two-way dialogue rather than one-way information sharing.

Parents want to feel heard, valued as experts, and treated as partners. Here are some steps to help you foster great conversations and collaborations. Get WISE!

W Welcome with warmth

Set a positive tone with a warm, genuine welcome. Let families know you're looking forward to learning from them.

"You have so much knowledge about your child. I'm going to learn a lot from you about how to best support [student]."

I Invite insights

Use open-ended questions to encourage conversation.

"What are some things that make [student] feel excited or happy? Proud?"
"What are some hopes you have for [student] this year in school?"
"What are some things you'd like me to know about [student]?"

S Set goals and expectations together

Talk about what each of you will do to support any goals you've discussed and what success might look like.

"We'll know [student] is starting to get more comfortable participating when we notice X and Y at home and at school. Here's what we'll each do to support that."

E End with clear next steps

A concrete plan for follow up helps everyone take action together.

"This conversation has been so helpful! Thank you for sharing your insights and partnering around this! Let's check in about how things are going in a few weeks. Do you prefer a phone call? Meeting?"

© 2026 ParentPowered PBC







ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Tip 4:
Active
Listening

Active Listening

Master the mechanics of active listening:

- Offer Your Full Attention
- Give Physical Cues When Appropriate
  Example: Nods, Eye Contact
- Notice if You Start to Lose Focus or Become Stressed - Breath to Re-Focus
- Hold Any Judgement
- Ask Clarifying Questions
- Summarize What You Heard
- Ask, “Did I get that right?”



ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Cultivating Ongoing Communication

THE ROPE IS A LOOP



ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Tip 1: Touchpoints, Reimagined

Bake Collaborations Into Your Existing Touchpoints

Assess for communication opportunities:

















ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Tip 2: Question with Purpose

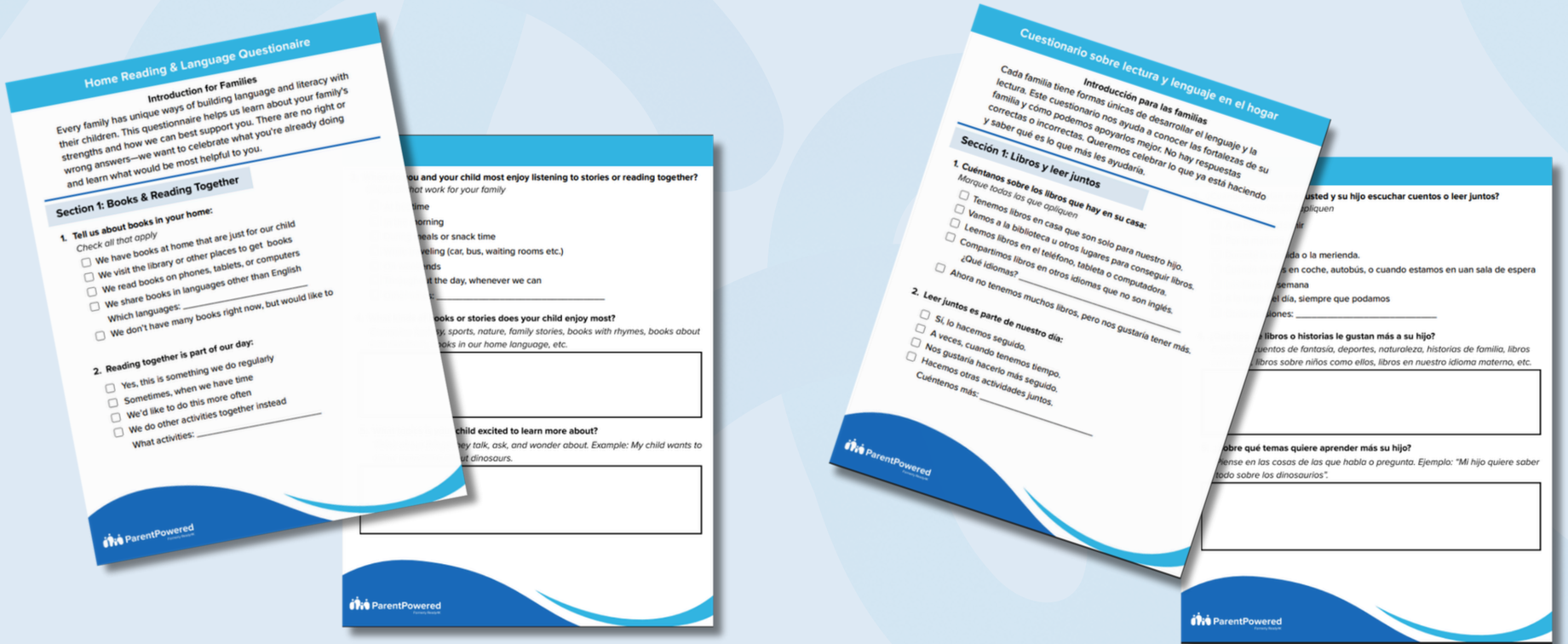
Ask Questions that Lead to Partnership

=

Questions with a purpose

WHAT do you want to know? WHY do you want to know it?

HOW will you act upon the information?



ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

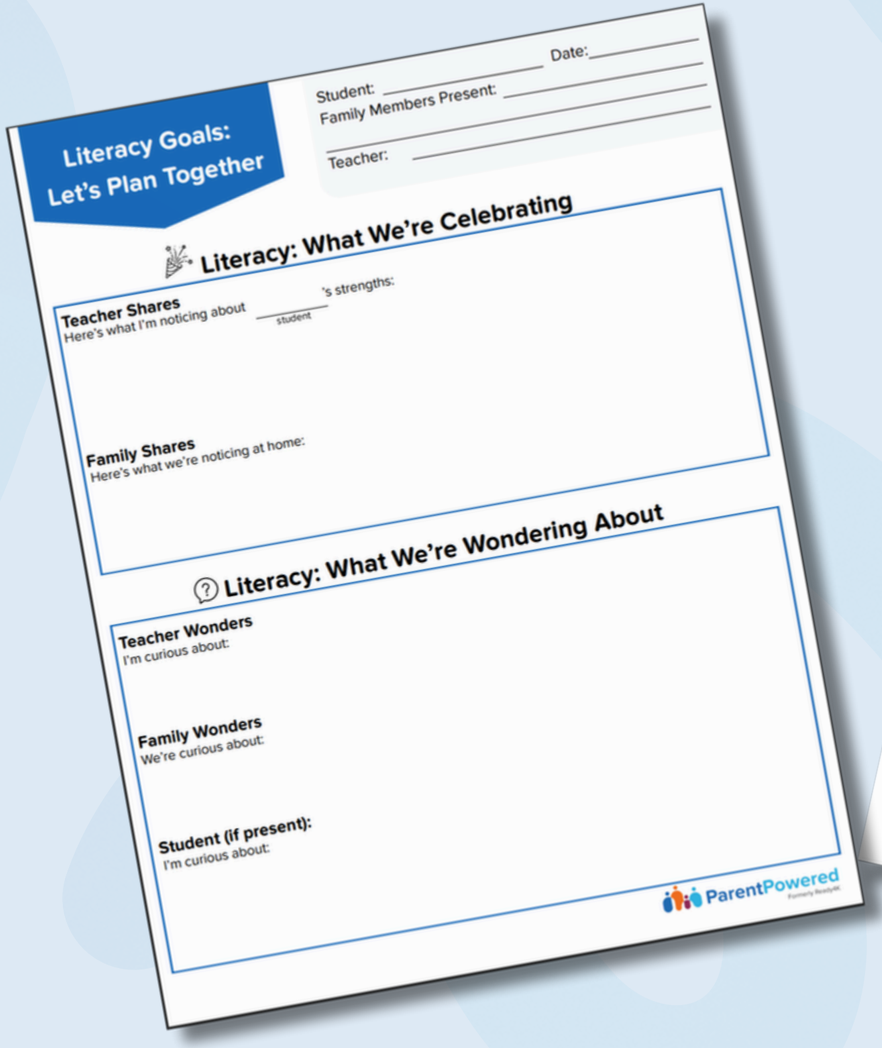
Tip 3: Conference Collaborations

Turn Conferences Into Collaborations

SHARE:

- WINS
- WONDERINGS
- WISHES

THEN CO-CREATE GOALS





ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Navigating Challenge

THE ROPE IS FRAYED



ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K



Facilitative Mediation:



The process where a neutral third party helps people in a dispute communicate more effectively and work toward their own mutually agreed-upon solution. The mediator does not make decisions or offer opinions, but instead guides the conversation to help all parties reach a resolution they feel good about.





ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Tip 1:
Invite
Involvement

Invite Involvement

As much as possible seek ideas from those involved.





Reflect:

- Am I doing all the talking?
- Am I asking open-ended questions?
- Have I asked for their perspective yet?

Try Asking:

- “What would help make this better?”
- “What are you hoping the outcome will be?”
- “Is there anything going on that you think might help us understand what [student] is dealing with right now?”
- “What are some things you see at home when it comes to X and Y?”

ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Tip 2: Forward Focus

Forward Focus

Move past what has happened and focus on desired outcomes.





Reflect:

- Is this conversation moving us forward or going in circles?
- Are we spending more time on the problem than on solutions?
- Have we identified a clear next step?

Try Asking:

- “What is one thing right now we can do to make this better?”
- “What’s something we can agree upon right now?”
- “What would you need to see happen this week to feel like things are moving in the right direction?”

ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Tip 3:
Get Curious,
Not Furious

Get Curious, Not Furious

Approach the conflict with genuine curiosity to keep the conversation open and productive.





Reflect:

- What do I need to learn about this person's experience?
- What else do I need to understand before I respond?
- Am I reacting to their words or their tone?

Try Asking:

- "Can you say more about that?"
- "What worries you most about this?"
- "Tell me more about what X is like for you."
- "What do you wish I knew about your child that I might not?"
- "I want to make sure I'm understanding you correctly. Is it that...? Did I get that right?"

Tip 4:
Dig Beneath the Demand

Dig Beneath the Demand

Move from what someone says they want to WHY they want it.





Reflect:

- What might be driving this request?
- What does this person need to feel heard or reassured right now?

Try Asking:

- “If we could fix this, what might be different?”
- “What are you most afraid of will happen if things stay the same?”
- “What does your child need most right now?”
- “If that’s not possible, what else might help?”

ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Strong Communication, Strengthened Rope

THE ROPE IS LOOPED AGAIN











ParentPowered
Formerly Ready4K

Interested in learning more about ParentPowered's evidence-based family engagement program for birth through grade 12?

LET'S TALK!

http://

bit.ly/contact-parentpowered



FACT: Technology can be a big part of a teen's life. Just noticing how your teen uses technology and talking about it, helps build positive habits.

TIP: Pause and notice when your teen is engaging with a screen. Cue into how and when they're using technology. Can you tell how it makes them feel?

GROWTH: During a calm moment, check-in with your teen. Try asking, "What do you enjoy doing online? Does it ever feel overwhelming? Surprising?"

Parent Powered

Formerly Ready4K