

Highly Effective Family Engagement:

5 Habits to Start Now





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What is family
engagement?



Family engagement is a shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways and in which families are committed to actively supporting their children's learning and development.

National Family, School and Community Engagement Working Group (now the NAFSCE Policy Council).

Family engagement can also be looked at as a collection of habits — things we do everyday or at a regular and recurring cadence, that help us build meaningful relationships with families.



GOALS

- ✓ Building the habit of reflection.
- ✓ Building the habit of listening.
- ✓ Building the habit of making learning visible.
- ✓ Building the habit of partnership.
- ✓ Building the habit of evaluating and following up.

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (Version 2)

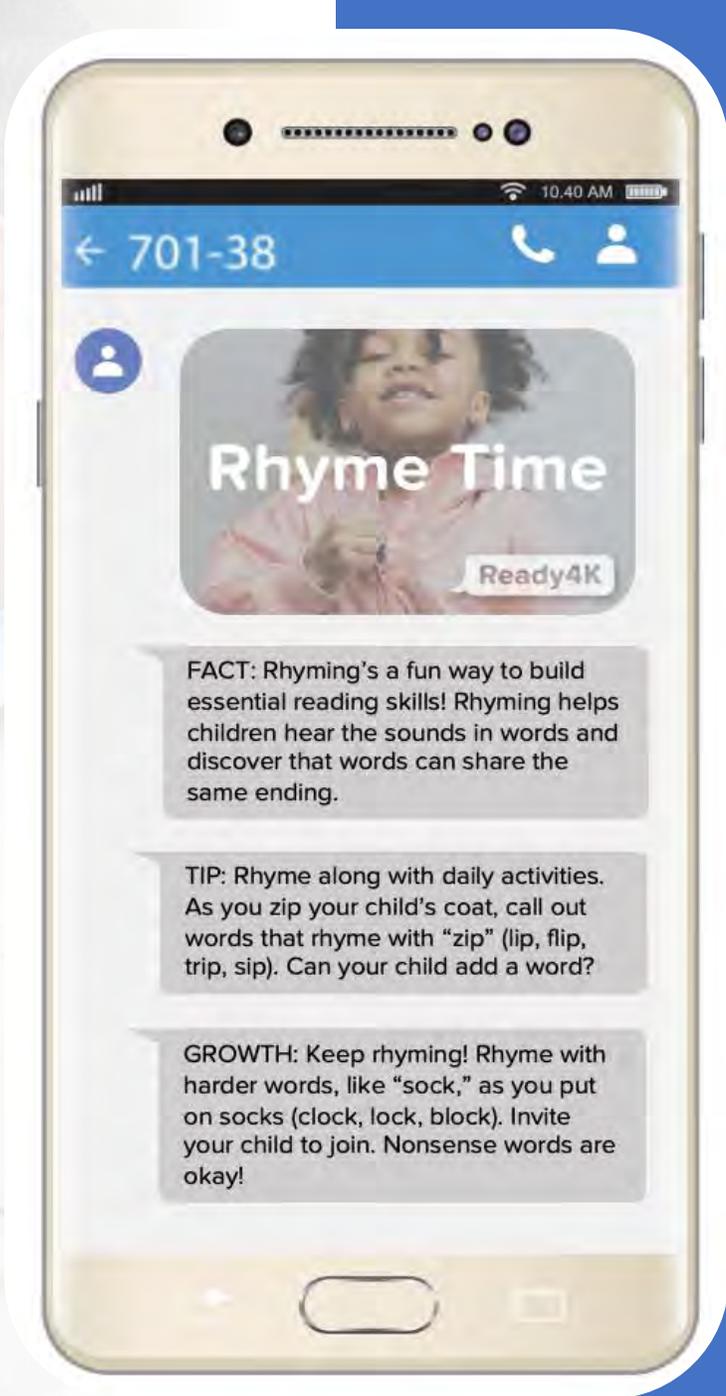




How to build a habit?

1. Set a Goal

2. Map it onto a moment





#1
**The Habit
of Reflection**



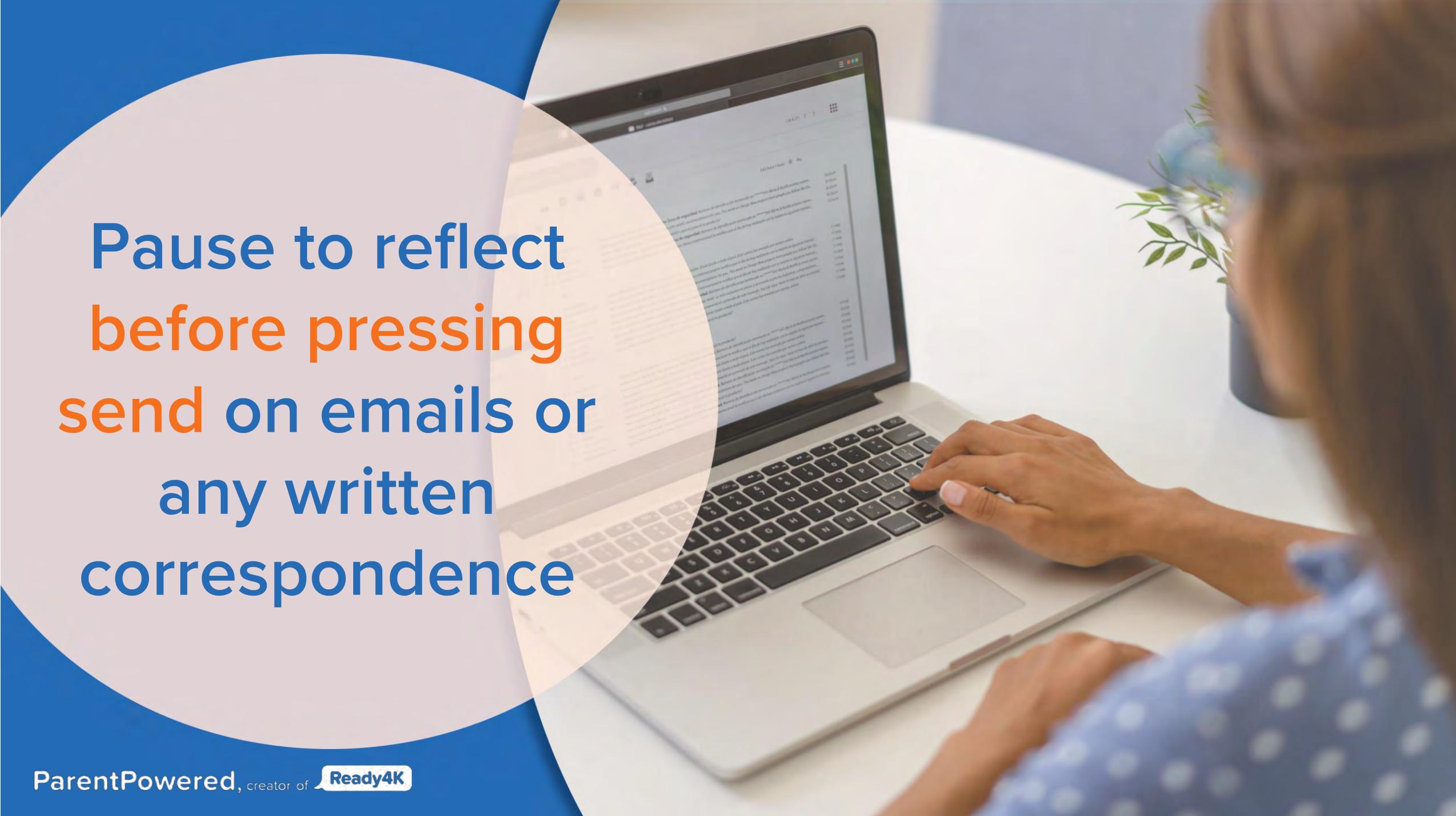
Questions for Reflection

- Is this accessible?
- Is this inclusive?
- Is it doable?
- Is it strength based? *How does it feel?*

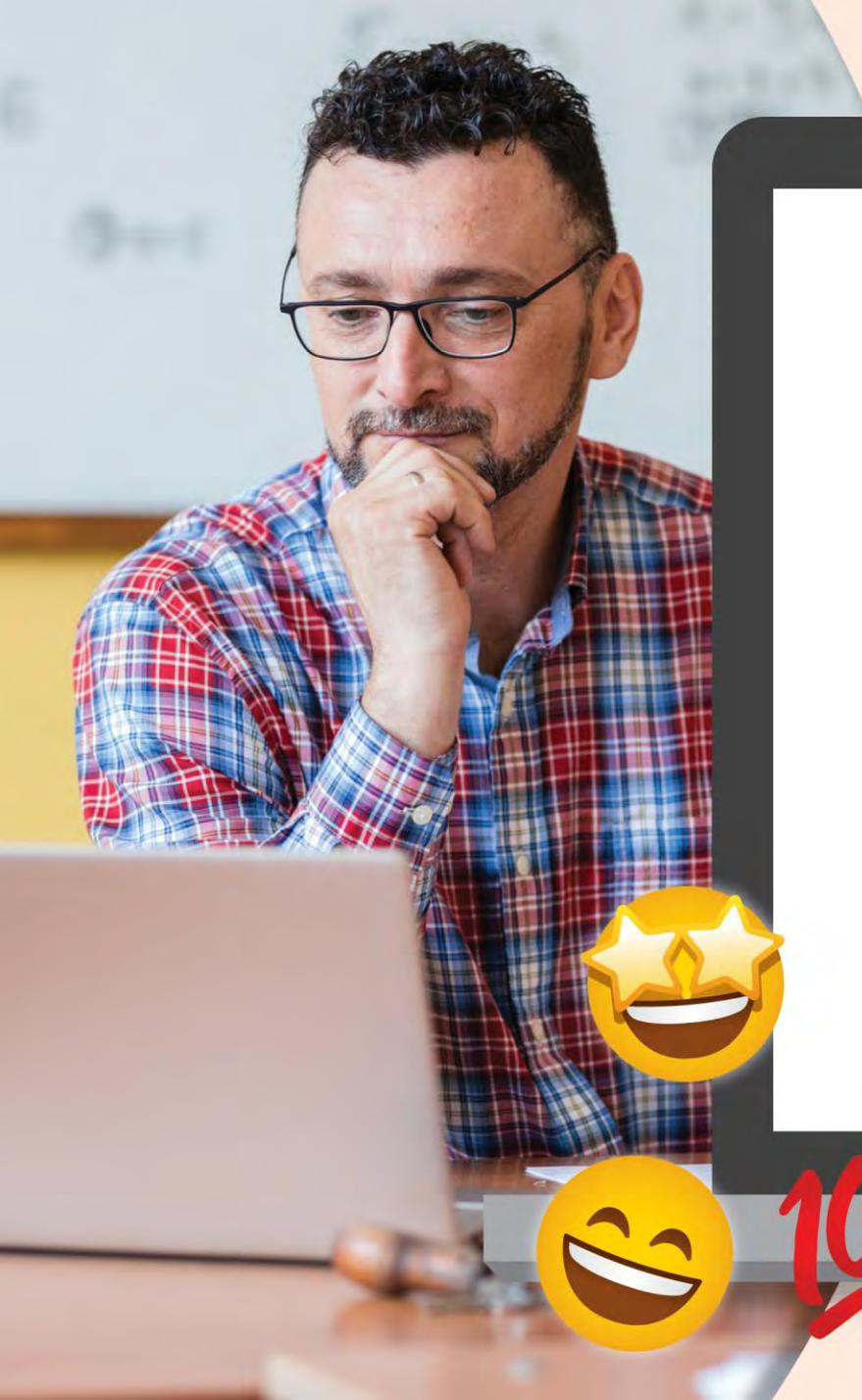




Picture Families

A person with long hair, wearing a blue polka-dot shirt, is seen from behind, sitting at a white desk and typing on a silver laptop. The laptop screen displays a document with text. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text. The background is a soft-focus office setting with a small potted plant on the desk.

Pause to reflect
before pressing
send on emails or
any written
correspondence



Before:



Hello MBE Families,

It was a pleasure to say hi to the MBE families yesterday at Meet and Greet! I am super excited to get to know students more and more as time goes on AND to see this spectacular staff in action!

I am sorry the weather is NOT looking good for Monday morning to start our day at 8:30am. **Still, no matter what, we'll run the traditional MBE gathering of students by homeroom with their new teachers in the back parking lot as has been the tradition.**

Families who are dropping off by car can escort their child out back or meet a student arriving by bus.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out.



100

After:



Hello Milton Brook Elementary School Families!

Teachers and staff are so excited to greet your students on the first day of school MONDAY AUGUST 30th AT 8:30 am.

There are lots of ways for parents and caregivers to join in on the first day, too.

YOU CAN JOIN IN PERSON

You're welcome to drop your child off or follow behind as they ride the bus. You'll have the chance to line up with your child in the back lot and say hi to their teachers.

- Click here for a map that shows how to get to school and where to park. www.mbe.org/maps
- Volunteers will be there to show you where to go.
- Interpreters will be there too!

YOU CAN JOIN FROM AFAR

We know that lots of families have important things to do during **this time. If you can't come, no problem.** Your child will get lots of support from new teachers and friends.

Teachers will post photos of the first day, so you can be a part of it.

- Visit www.mbe.org/classrooms and select your child's grade to view photos.

We are so excited to have your family as part of our Milton Brook community.

****If you have any questions about the first day, call Will at the front desk. His number is 413-228-4459. He's not only our wonderful administrator. He's a parent at the school too. If you need language support just start the call by letting him know, "I need an interpreter."**



100



Welcome to Milton Brook Elementary School!

**WE ARE SO GLAD
YOU ARE HERE.** 🤗



FIRST: Please stand on the
yellow feet and look into
the camera.



NEXT: Press the red
button, tell us who you
are and the reason for
your visit so we can best
assist you!

Scaffolding
School Entry

Welcome to the HOPE ju

Hablo
español
y necesito
un
intérprete

Scaffolding
School Entry

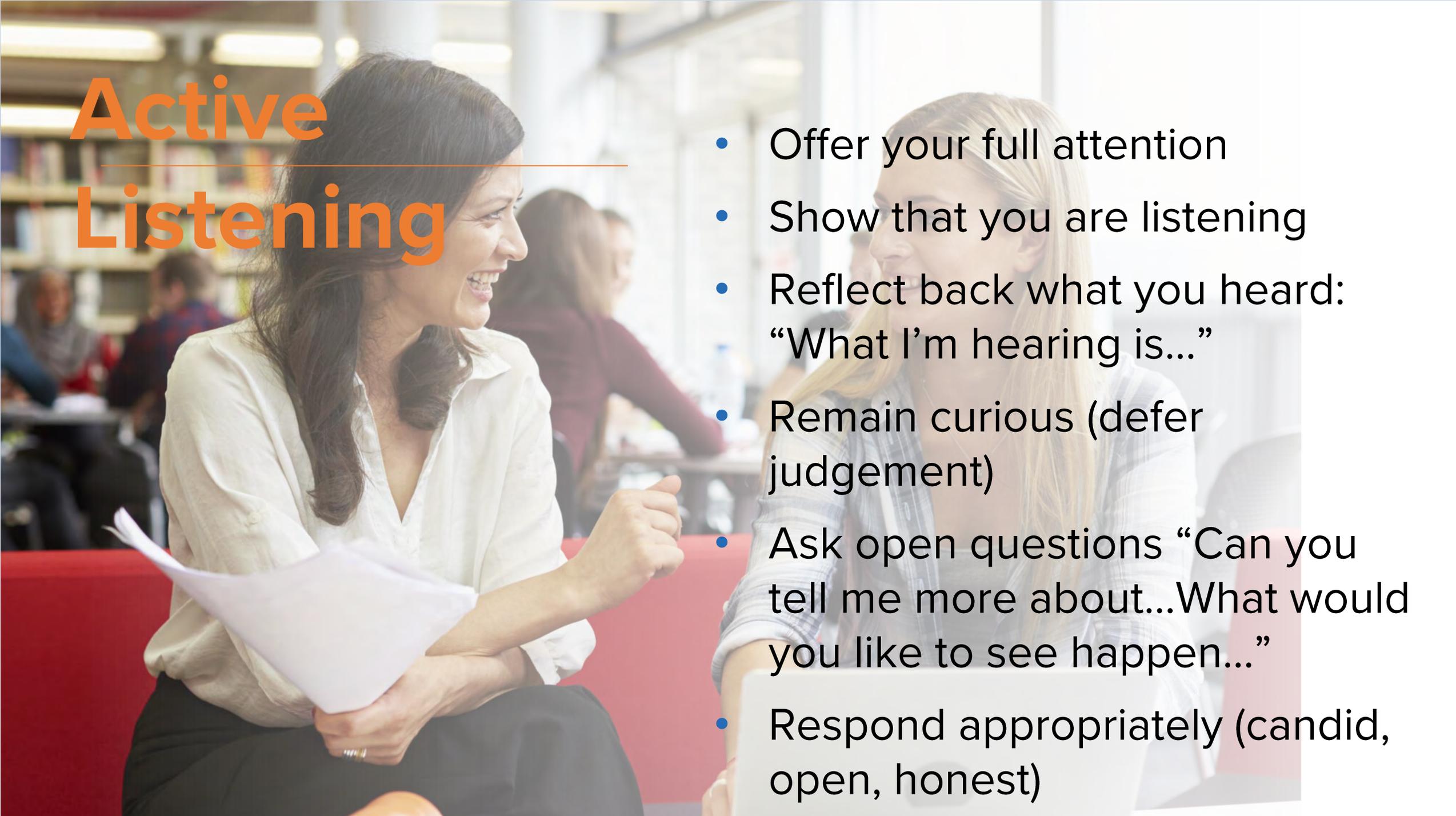
اتحدث العربية واحناج مترجم



#2

**The Habit
of Asking
and Listening**

Active Listening



- Offer your full attention
- Show that you are listening
- Reflect back what you heard: “What I’m hearing is...”
- Remain curious (defer judgement)
- Ask open questions “Can you tell me more about...What would you like to see happen...”
- Respond appropriately (candid, open, honest)

Quick Tips Text

- OPEN DOOR POLICY
- Let families go first
- Building in 5 extra minutes for meetings
- Seek out informal interactions





What Happens When Listening Gets Hard?

Fair Process

- Engagement
- Explanation
- Expectation clarity

A woman wearing a light-colored hijab and a white long-sleeved shirt is leaning over a table, looking down at something. In the foreground, the back of a person's head and shoulders is visible, wearing glasses and a grey sweater. The background shows a classroom or meeting room with large windows and other people seated at tables. A blue curved shape is on the left side of the image.

#3

**The Habit of
Making Learning
Visible
(aka Sharing)**

Sharing from School to Home





CONCLUSION

PROBLEM

HYPOTHESIS

DATA



Sharing from Home to School





FIRST: Let families know why it matters

You know so much about your child. When you share [X specific thing], it helps

...

- The teachers
- The school
- The child
- The community

THEN: Give really, doable ways to share

Do an
audit:

- What's already going home with students?
- How can I make home to school a part of it?
- What are my other points of contact?
- How can I make sharing a part of that, too?



This assignment
took____ minutes
to complete. As my
child worked, I
noticed_____.

Building Communication Habits At Home

The more parents
know, the more they're
able
to share.



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Ask AWAY!



*Questions to Get Kids
Talking about School*

TRY DIFFERENT SPARKS

Sometimes just asking a question isn't quite enough to spark an answer. Try some of these tricks to get things started:

Start with schoolwork



If your child brought writing, a worksheet, or art home from school, take it out and ask about it. Try: "It looks like you made this at school. Can you tell me about it? How did you do it? Did your friends make one too? What are some of the other things you made or did in school today?"

You share first



Try telling about a memory you have from school. You might describe your playground or lunchroom. You might describe your desk or objects in your classroom. Then ask, "Does your room look like that? What things are in your classroom? Where is your favorite spot in the room?"

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Try, try, try

Sometimes all it takes is the right question to really get your child talking. It's great to ask questions that can't just be answered in one word. Here are some questions to try. You might ask a different one each day. Or, if you find a question that really works, ask it each day.



- What was the best part of your day? Why was it great?
- What was the hardest part of your day? Why was it hard?
- What's one fun thing that happened today?
- What's one thing you wish had happened at school today?
- Who did you play with today? What do they like to play?
- What did kids play on the playground? What did you play on the playground?
- Did the teacher read a story today? What was it about?
- Did anything surprise you about school?
- What's different about school this year? What's the same?
- Can you show me something you learned or did today?
- Did anything loud happen at school?
- Did anything really quiet happen at school?
- Did anything funny happen at school today?
- Who did you sit next to at lunch? What did you talk about?
- What are some of the rules at school? What do you think of those rules? Would you change any? Why?
- What's something you are excited to learn or do at school tomorrow?

And... ASK THE TEACHER

Your child's teacher is there for you, too. It's always okay to reach out with questions or things you'd like to share about your child. Start by asking the teacher the best way to reach out. Try: "What's the best way for me to reach out to you with any questions? Should I email, text, call? What time of day is best for reaching out to you?"

To start things off you might ask: "What are some things my child will be learning at the start of school? How can I support that learning at home?"

You know your child best and can share things you notice, too. For example, "My child has seemed very quiet and a little nervous in the morning. Have you noticed this too? Does it last throughout the day? What seems to help?"

Your insights will help the teacher notice and respond to your child!



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TIP 1: BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER



Remain calm and curious.

It's totally normal to have reactions to what your teen is saying, but they will be paying close attention to how you respond. It's important to manage your reactions as they share. As best you can, remain calm and curious. It can help to take some slow breaths if you start to feel yourself getting stressed or overwhelmed.



Share back what you hear.

After your teen has spoken, tell them what you heard. For example, "What I heard you say is that you felt hurt when..." This lets them know you were really listening. It also helps them feel understood. You can also ask, "Did I get that right?" This gives them the chance to clear up any miscommunication.



Show understanding.

It's important that teens know their feelings are valid. You can validate their feelings even if you don't agree with them. For example, after your teen shares you might say, "I can understand why you felt angry in that moment," or "That sounds like a really challenging situation."



Ask if they'd like support.

Your teen may have shared because they want your advice. Or maybe they shared because they just wanted to talk through something. After your teen shares it's always okay to ask, "Do you want some help thinking it through together, or did you just want me to know about that?"



Follow up.

Some conversations happen in one sitting, but many are ongoing. For example if your child told you about something hard that happened at school, ask about it the next day. Try, "You told me about X yesterday, how did that turn out today?"

AND...

★ If there is ever a time you feel like your teen's safety and well-being is at risk, it's always okay for YOU to reach out for support. You might speak with their pediatrician, guidance counselor, or mental health professional for help putting the right supports in place.

TIP 1

BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER

What is active listening?

Active listening means you're giving your teen your full attention when they speak. It's listening not just to their words but their actions and emotions too. As they speak, you're not thinking about your response or advice you'll give. Instead, you're working to understand their perspective and remember what they say.

And active listening means you're working to demonstrate that you hear them. How? By asking open questions, acknowledging their feelings, and sharing back what you heard them say.

When you are an active listener, your teen learns that it's okay to share. They learn that their thoughts and feelings are important to you. Active listening creates a safe and supportive space for them to tell you about their ups and downs.

HERE ARE SOME DETAILS ON HOW TO DO IT:



Be fully present.

Set aside distractions like phones and computers. As best as you can, try to just concentrate on what your teen is saying. Notice if you start daydreaming or thinking your own thoughts. If that happens, remind yourself to cue back into your teen.



Notice more than just their words.

Teens communicate in lots of ways—with their tone, face, body. As they talk, pay attention to how they are moving and sitting. Are they talking quickly? Slowly? These things can give you clues into how they might be feeling.



Practice patience.

Teens can tell long tales about their day or their experiences. They may not always make sense. That's okay. Avoid interrupting and allow them to pause and think things through. It's okay if there are long silences. Your teen may just be processing their ideas. Giving them time to do this shows that you're engaged.



If you do chime in, do it with an open-ended question.

For example, you might say, "Can you tell me more about that?" or "What did you think about that?" or "How did you feel when that happened?" Teens can be especially sensitive to feeling judged by others. It's important that your questions feel genuinely curious.

Active Listening



TIP 3

MAKE IT A ROUTINE

Teens will be more likely to talk with you about big stuff and hard stuff if they're in the habit of talking with you about little everyday stuff. When conversations just become a routine, you lay a foundation for great communication.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO TRY:

Ask them to share details from their day. Any detail is fine. You might give fun prompts like, "Let's both share one rose (good thing) and one thorn (hard thing) from our day."



Ask about their opinions. Ask what they think about current events. Get their opinion on a movie they think you should watch.



Ask about their passions and show genuine interest. Can they tell you about the game they watched on TV? A song they love? A book they can't put down?



Try using artifacts to spark conversation. Each week, you might make it a point to ask about something your teen made or wrote.



Make it a routine to talk about feelings. A great way to do this is to share how you're feeling. "I'm feeling frustrated because I have to work late tonight."



As communication and sharing become part of your daily routine, you might notice even more about your teen. It's normal for teens to have ups and downs, but it's also important that you keep an eye out for signs that your teen might be having powerful emotions.

FIRST

Look out for any big changes in your teen's behaviors or patterns.

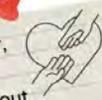
- Have their sleeping patterns or appetite suddenly changed?
- Do they seem less patient? More irritable?
- Are they more quiet than usual? Less social? More antsy?

THEN

Mention what you see and ask about it.

- For example: "I notice you've been having trouble sleeping? Is there anything that's been on your mind? Anything bothering you? Making you feel worried?"

And remember, if you're concerned about your child's health, safety, or well-being, it's always okay to reach out for support.



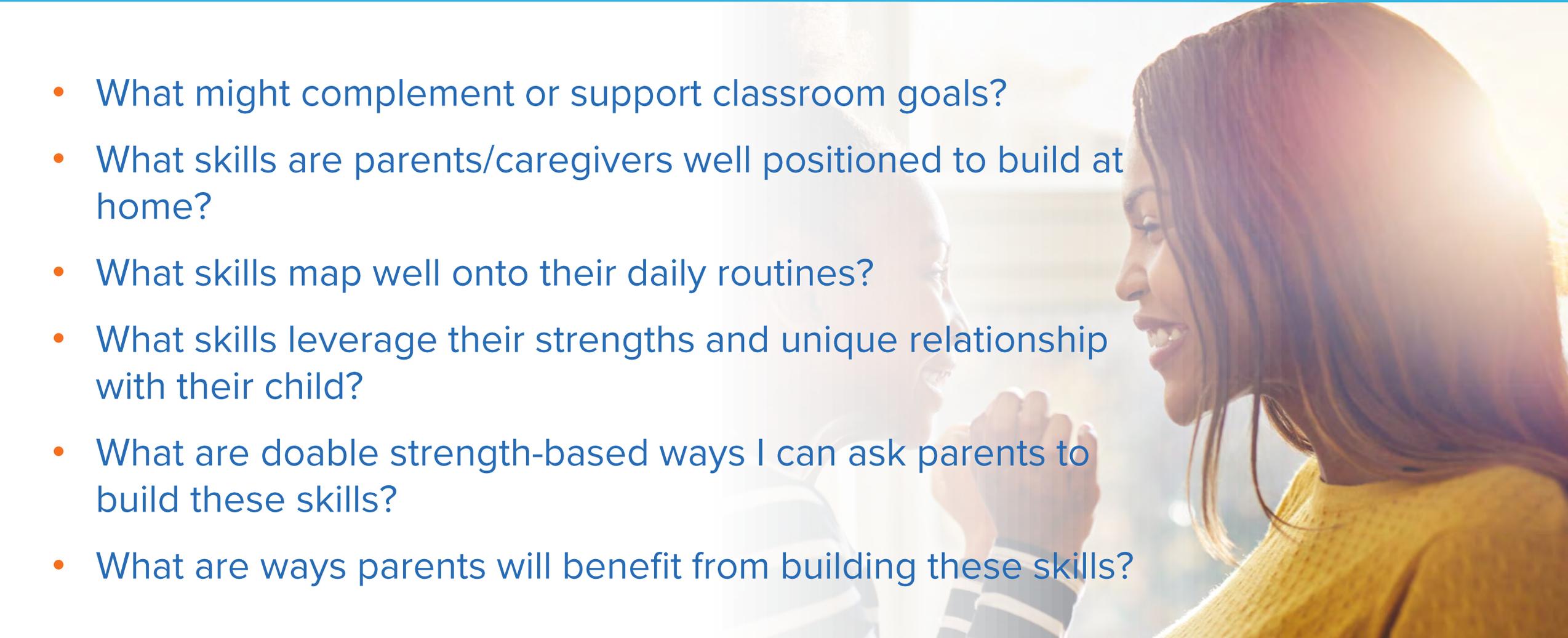
A woman with long dark hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, is smiling and looking towards another woman whose back is to the camera. The second woman has long brown hair and is wearing a white shirt with red vertical stripes. They appear to be in a professional or office setting. A large white circle on the right side of the image contains the text "#4 The Habit of Partnering".

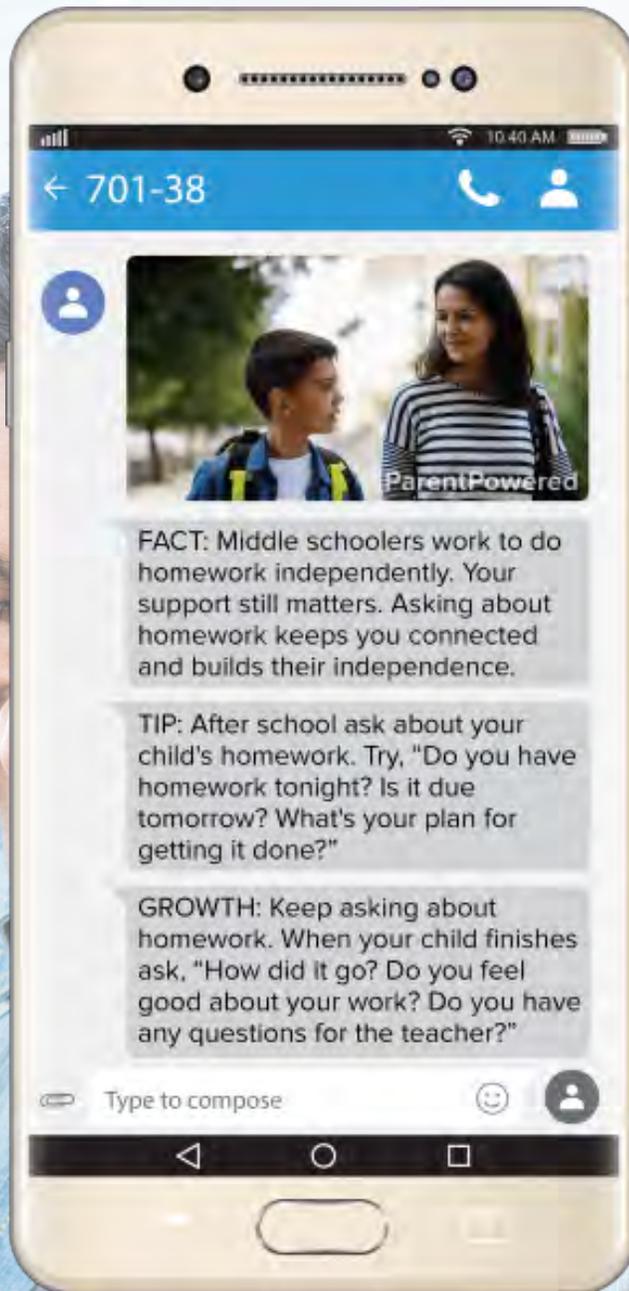
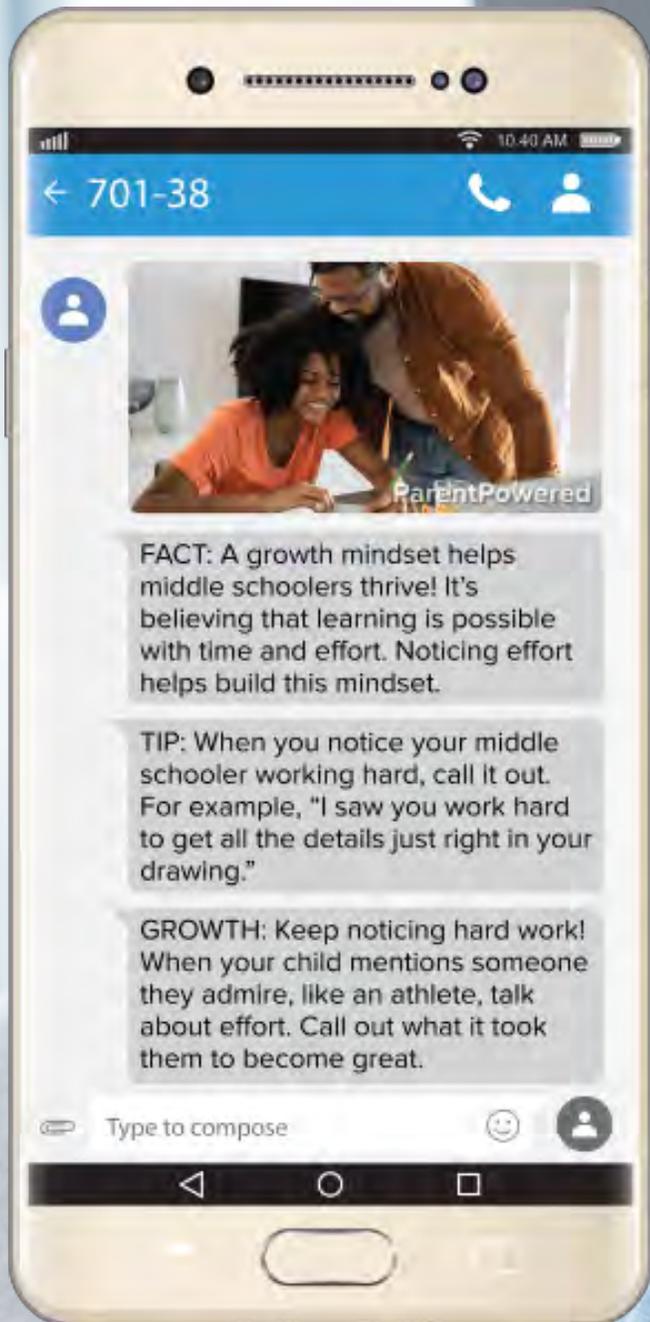
#4

**The Habit of
Partnering**

Vetting Skills Through a Parenting Lens

What skills are a great match for home?

- What might complement or support classroom goals?
 - What skills are parents/caregivers well positioned to build at home?
 - What skills map well onto their daily routines?
 - What skills leverage their strengths and unique relationship with their child?
 - What are doable strength-based ways I can ask parents to build these skills?
 - What are ways parents will benefit from building these skills?
- 



Objectives

In this unit, students learned about adaptations and how they support the life of plants and animals; they learn to distinguish the difference between behavioral and structural adaptations.

List three different ways animals, plants, and humans adapt to their environments.

Animal	Plant	Human

Families from different regions can share

Give an example

Explain in your own words the meaning of structural and behavioral adaptation.

Give one example of each.

Explain to a trusted adult

Ask a trusted adult to share a time they had to adapt

This assignment was



It took my child _____min. to complete

How does homework become an opportunity to partner?

How do conferences and workshops become an opportunity to partner?

Goal-Setting Family Conference Form

Name _____

Date _____

Teacher Comments (strengths/growth areas/concerns):

Family Comments (strengths/growth areas/concerns):

Student Comments:

Goal	What will the teacher do to meet this goal?	What will the scholar do to meet this goal?	What will the family do to meet this goal?

Student Signature

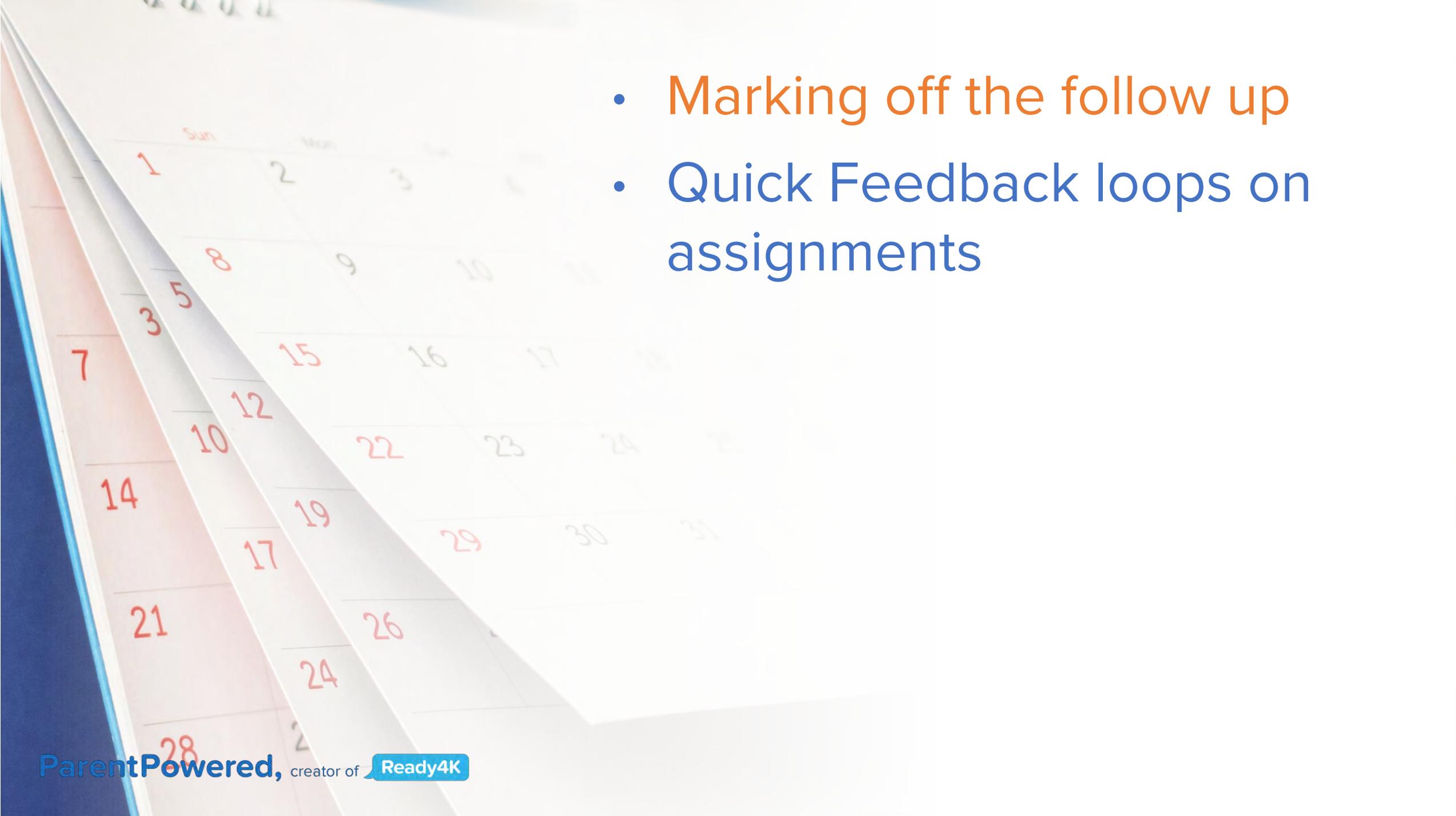
Teacher Signature

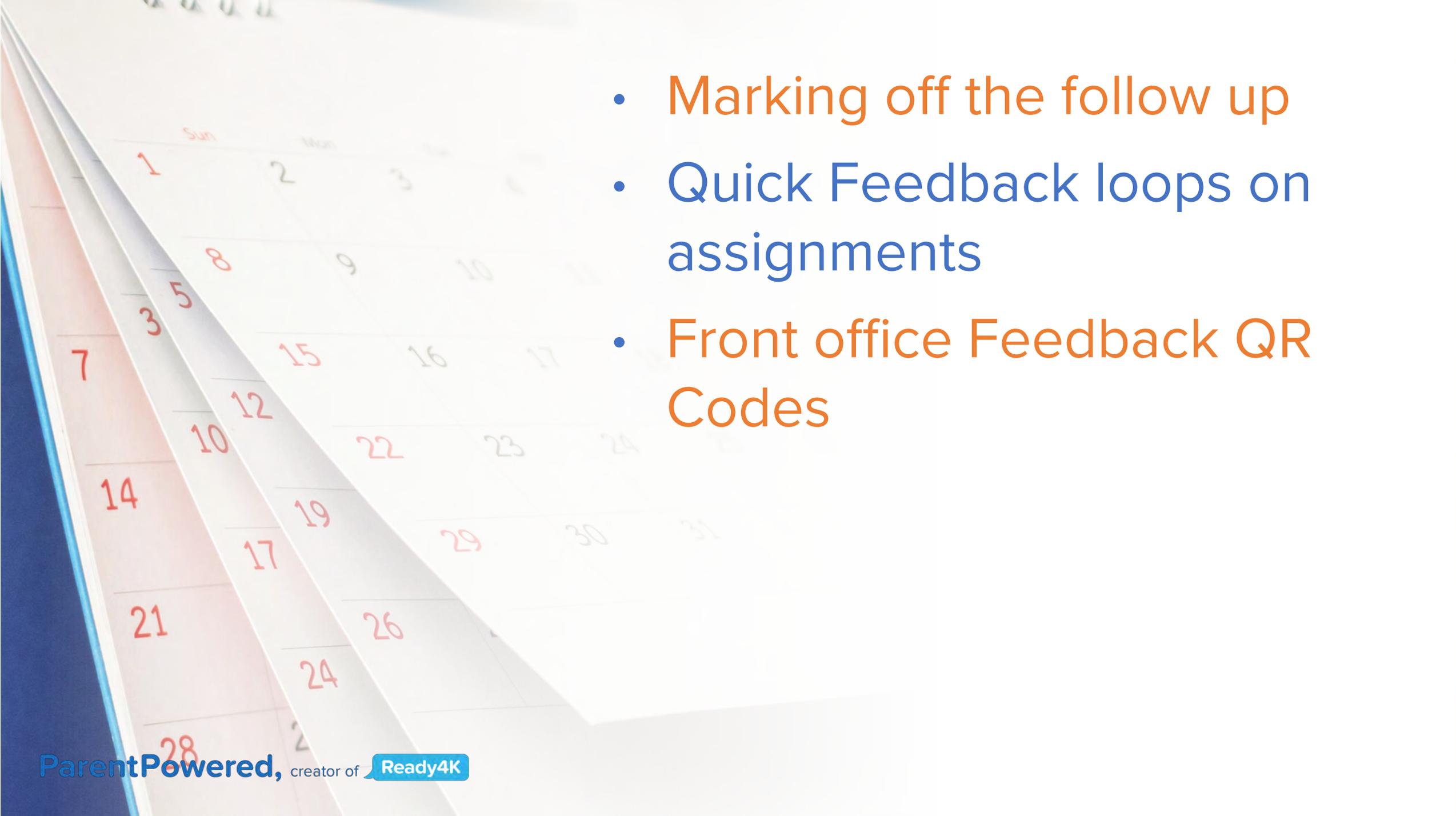
Family Signature(s)



#5
The Habit of
Evaluating
and
Following Up

- Marking off the follow up

- 
- Marking off the follow up
 - Quick Feedback loops on assignments

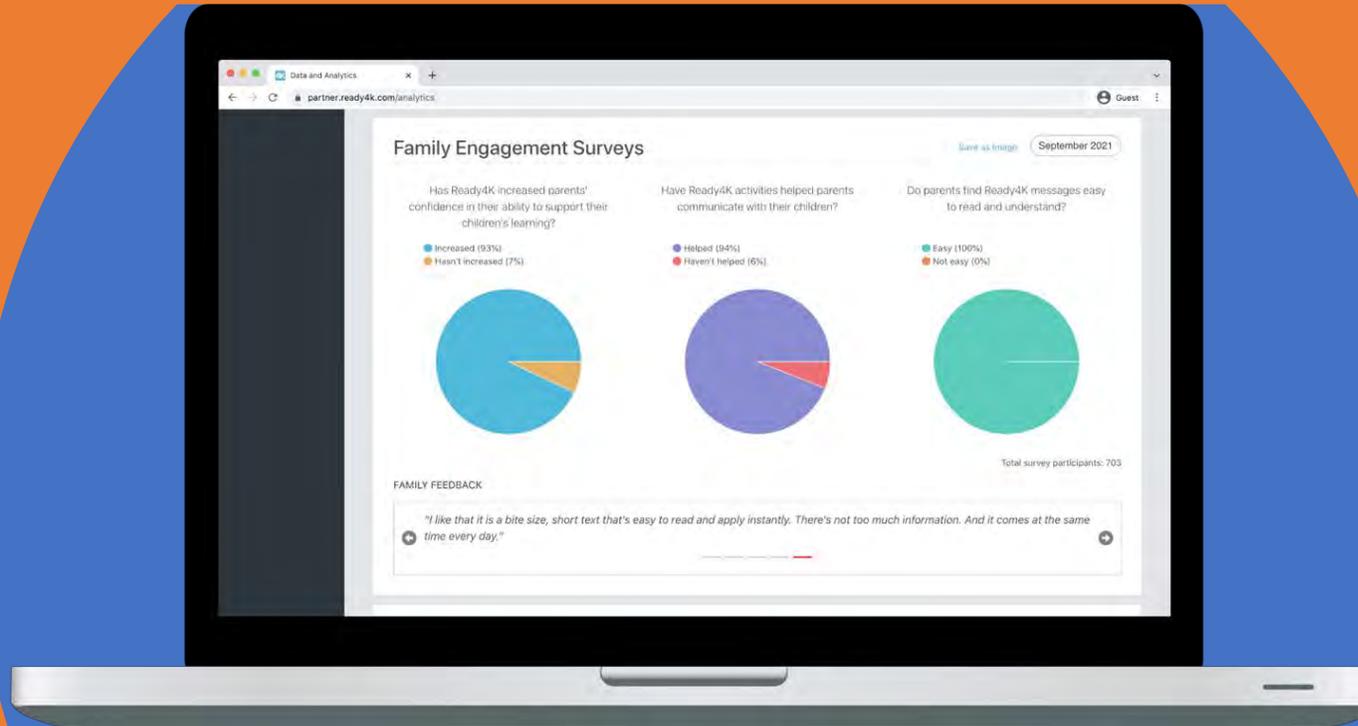
- 
- Marking off the follow up
 - Quick Feedback loops on assignments
 - Front office Feedback QR Codes

- 
- Marking off the follow up
 - Quick Feedback loops on assignments
 - Front office Feedback QR Codes
 - Suggestion Box

- 
- Marking off the follow up
 - Quick Feedback loops on assignments
 - Front office Feedback QR Codes
 - Suggestion Box
 - Attendance/sign-in information

- 
- Marking off the follow up
 - Quick Feedback loops on assignments
 - Front office Feedback QR Codes
 - Suggestion Box
 - Attendance/sign-in information
 - Family/Community Advisory Councils

Using Surveys to Evaluate



What do my families think about
ParentPowered programs?

Survey Tip #1

Know the What / Why /
How

- What do you need to know?

What do my families think about
ParentPowered programs?

Survey Tip #1

Know the What / Why / How

- What do you need to know?
- Why do you want to know it?

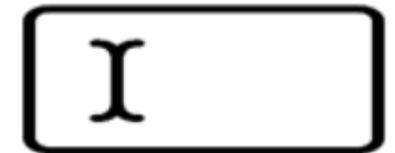
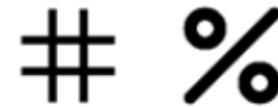
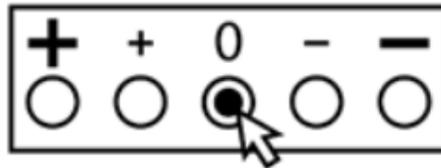
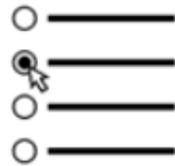
What do my families think about
ParentPowered programs?

Survey Tip #1

Know the What / Why / How

- What do you need to know?
- Why do you want to know it?
- How are you going to use it?

Types of Questions Matter



	Multiple Choice/Binary	Likert Scale	Continuous	Open Response
When you:	Need a vote or a ranking	Need to understand preferences or compare options	Need to understand a distribution	Need to capture stories
Example	Which of the following kinds of pizza do you plan to eat?	On a scale of 1-4, how likely are you to come to the Pizza Party?	How many slices of pizza do you expect to eat at the party?	What would you like to do at the party?

What do my families think about
ParentPowered programs?

Survey Tip #3

Show Families Their Impact

- Share how data has informed your decision-making
- **Show that you've listened:**
"Based on feedback from the last family survey..."

What do my families think about
ParentPowered programs?

Survey Tip #4

Inclusion Counts



What do my families think about
ParentPowered programs?

Survey Tip #4

Inclusion Counts

- Translate your survey



What do my families think about
ParentPowered programs?

Survey Tip #4

Inclusion Counts

- Translate your survey
- Level you text



What do my families think about
ParentPowered programs?

Survey Tip #4

Inclusion Counts

- Translate your survey
- Level your text
- Enlist your staff



What do my families think about
ParentPowered programs?

Survey Tip #4

Inclusion Counts

- Translate your survey
- Level your text
- Enlist your staff
- Leverage the community



"I know I am a partner in my child's education"



"I am an important part of my school community."



"This school is a place for my whole family!"



Recap

- ✓ Building the habit of reflection.
- ✓ Building the habit of listening.
- ✓ Building the habit of making learning visible.
- ✓ Building the habit of partnership.
- ✓ Building the habit of evaluating and following up.

Take Away!
The link to download this
Family Communication
Tip Sheet is in Chat,
and keep an eye on your
email inbox.

Crafting Communications That Connect with Families

Tips to communicate with families in a way that supports and engages them as partners in their children's education.

ParentPowered
creator of Ready4K

1 Break down complex topics into manageable activities.

Families are great partners in building children's academic and social-emotional skills, but they also have a lot on their plates. That's why clear, concise, and actionable communication is a must. Break it down by WHAT, WHY, and HOW.

WHAT do you want families to do or know?
WHY is it important?
HOW can they do it?
HOW can they keep this learning going?

Write a WHAT, WHY, and HOW that leverage families' relationships with their children and fit into daily routines.

Here's an example:

FACT: Describing the things you do builds language skills. These skills make it easier for kids to share their thoughts. Their reading skills get stronger, too!

TIP: Describe your actions during daily activities. As you do the dishes, talk about it. Try, "I'm pouring in the blue soap." Make sure you use lots of details.

GROWTH: Now it's your child's turn. As they play a game, ask "What are you doing?" Ask for details like, "How do you play?" and "Why do you like it?"

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creator of Ready4K
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1

A young girl with dark hair, wearing a light blue denim shirt, is laughing and looking towards a woman on her right. The woman is also laughing and looking back at the girl. She is wearing a dark blue button-down shirt with a colorful floral embroidery. They are standing in front of a brick wall. A large blue speech bubble is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text "What questions do you have?".

What questions
do you have?

Interested in learning more about ParentPowered's evidence-based family engagement program for birth through grade 8?

Let's Talk!

bit.ly/3Qdxnwx

info@parentpowered.com

