

Relationship Mapping to Support Positive School Connections

Click the [hyperlinked text](#) to learn more.

Summary

During the pandemic, schools and districts are finding new ways to build and maintain relationships between teachers, staff, and students. Adult to Student Relationship Mapping is the systematic identification of student-adult trusted relationships in the school community. This approach allows educators to identify students who may be at risk of not having such a trusted connection and match them with appropriate supports for navigating academic and personal challenges throughout the school year. For more recommendations and sample resources on supporting the social emotional well-being of students, as well as teachers and staff during the 2020-2021 school year, please review the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) [Social Emotional Learning Guidance](#).

Please note: DESE is providing this information as a service to educators, schools, and districts and may revise or supplement it from time to time. The publication of this information does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation by DESE of any resource, product, curriculum, or system. DESE welcomes comments, additional information, and suggestions; please contact Jacquelyn.m.gantzer@mass.gov.

Benefits



Systematic & data-driven approach that can be tracked over time



Helps educators reflect on barriers to and opportunities for adult-to-student relationship building



Informs action plan to ensure every student is well supported



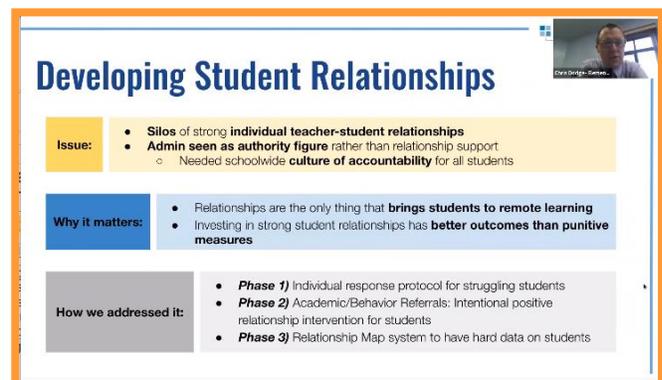
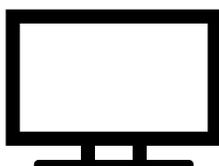
Engages the full diversity of educators in connecting with students

A positive relationship and regular communication with a caring adult have [proven benefits](#) for students' social emotional, personal, and academic well-being. Learn more about these benefits [here](#).

Implementation Tips

- ✓ Establish an agreed-upon definition of "trusting relationship"
- ✓ Consider culturally responsive practices when collecting data and developing plans
- ✓ Ensure buy-in from all adults involved to promote sustainability of the practice
- ✓ Modify practice to fit elementary, middle, and high school contexts

Hear from Orange Elementary School Principal Chris Dodge about his school's strategy for [developing student relationships](#).



Developing Student Relationships

Issue:

- Silos of strong individual teacher-student relationships
- Admin seen as authority figure rather than relationship support
 - Needed schoolwide culture of accountability for all students

Why it matters:

- Relationships are the only thing that brings students to remote learning
- Investing in strong student relationships has better outcomes than punitive measures

How we addressed it:

- **Phase 1)** Individual response protocol for struggling students
- **Phase 2)** Academic/Behavior Referrals: Intentional positive relationship intervention for students
- **Phase 3)** Relationship Map system to have hard data on students

Orange Public Schools [Website](#) | [District Profile](#)

Orange has been utilizing relationship mapping to strengthen the district's sense of community and target specific adult-student relationship challenges. Chris Dodge, principal of both Orange elementary schools, [shared his insights](#) for fostering strong connections at school and implementing relationship mapping at LearnLaunch's Relationship Mapping Workshop.

Process

- **Step 1:** Create a [shareable spreadsheet](#) with all students' names
- **Step 2:** Ask all adults connected with students (teachers, counselors, support staff, and others in the school) to evaluate their relationships with each student using a set of guiding questions
- **Step 3:** Review & reflect on the results in teams (such as by grade level)
- **Step 4:** Based on the number of trusted adult relationships students do or do not have, develop targeted action plans to improve student support and foster connections
- **Step 5:** Revisit and update the spreadsheet data at regular intervals throughout the year to track progress and update student support plans

For more information on the relationship mapping protocol, review [EAB Relationship Mapping and the Making Caring Common Relationship Mapping Project](#).

About LearnLaunch

[Workshops](#) | [Building Blocks](#)

DESE is partnering with LearnLaunch to build capacity among district and school leaders for equitable and high quality remote learning.

Massachusetts educators have access to a free and state-aligned planning framework: The Building Blocks of Equitable Remote Learning. To learn more about relationship building and access resources, explore the [Include SEL building block](#).

LearnLaunch is hosting a series of highly interactive workshops to help district and school leaders solve problems through the planning and implementation of their remote and hybrid learning programs. Register for upcoming workshops [here](#).



Another Approach to Relationship Mapping

Natick Public Schools [Website](#) | [District Profile](#)

Natick takes a student-driven approach to relationship mapping by asking students to evaluate their relationships with educators as part of a larger [district focus](#) on community and relationship building.

This is a variation of relationship mapping; school staff meet to review student-generated data rather than teacher-generated responses.

Use of alternative methods and protocols for relationship identification

- 1 Develop a connectivity survey to identify how many students identify as having strong relationships with trusted adults in school & how many students do not
- 2 Administer the survey annually to all students
- 3 Review & reflect on the results in teams (such as by grade level)
- 4 Confidentially share with teachers & staff the names of the students who indicated they do not have a strong relationship with a trusted adult
- 5 Develop an action plan to proactively engage these students & match them with appropriate school resources & programs