

# MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS LEARNING SERIES

## Trauma Strand

*Building “Stronger” Relationships with Families*, Presented by John M. Kronstain, M.Ed., NCC

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### Webinar Summary:

*Families play a critical role in the life and development of our students. However, we work in a system that often excludes their voice and knowledge. Building a bridge with a particular family could in turn, build bridges with other families in their neighborhood. Whether we are in-person or virtual, having family buy-in, support, feedback, and voice will be critical to the success of our students. We need to examine the barriers that keep us, the school, from forming these relationships and the barriers that keep them, the families, from forming relationships with us.*

### Resources:

[20 Tips for Developing Positive Relationships with Families](#) (eduTopia)

[Reunite, Renew, & Thrive: A Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Roadmap for Reopening School](#) (CASEL)

[Helping Children and Families Cope with the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) Family/Student Workbook

[Making Families Feel Welcome](#) (Greater Good Science Center). Reflective activity for teachers/staff on how to help families feel safe, supported, and welcome

[Strategies for Equitable Family Engagement](#) (State Support Network)

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[Tools for Educators to Listen to and Learn from Families During COVID-19 School Closures](#) (Culturally Responsive Education Hub)

#### References:

[Collaborative for Academic, Social, Emotional Learning \(CASEL\). \*Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Roadmap for Reopening School\*. June 2020. Accessed July 10, 2020.](#)

#### Discussion Guide:

1. What are ways your school currently attempts to engage families in positive and supportive ways?
2. What are some of the reasons you have heard teachers/staff give for not keeping in regular contact with families? How could you help them address these barriers?
3. Based on your experiences, what are the difficulties facing families “these days?” This could be pre-COVID-19 or currently.
4. Which family demographics does your school build strong relationships with or engages/reaches on a regular basis (e.g. two-parent households, Hispanic/Latino families, etc.)? What are the specific communication methods or events they use to build these strong relationships?
5. Which family demographics does your school seem to build weak relationships with or struggle to reach (e.g. families who have students with IEPs, Black families, etc.)? What can you, in your role, do to help change this dynamic between families and the school?

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6. Think of a family you worked to build a positive relationship with and they then became a strong partner with your or the school. What “worked” for you to be able to break down the walls/barriers? How can some of those strategies be used or taught to faculty/staff to improve their ability to work with families?
7. Which takeaways from this presentation do you find are immediately applicable to your current practice?
8. Is there an area of yourself or your practice that today’s presentation caused you to examine or question? If so, what? How are you going to continue to process and grow from this realization?