



Building Belonging with Community Conversations

Introductions



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BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE SOCIETY, TOGETHER

We amplify the voices of youth and families to promote equity, inclusion, and belonging in our schools and communities. We work in relationship with others to understand the systems and structures that perpetuate exclusion while ensuring that systems are moving toward inclusion.



ROOTS OF
INCLUSION



Getting to Know You

Please share:

- ① Role
- ② What school or district are you joining us from today?

How we will learn together today:

- Be Inclusive
- Share from one's own perspective
- Listen to build understanding, learning from others
- Practice self-care. Attend to your personal needs.
- Enjoy the time together!

Is there anything that needs to be added?





Creating a Space of Belonging

- Intention that we bring to our interactions
- Inviting others to join in a shared experience
- Understanding how our unique qualities of spirit contribute to other sense of belonging

Qualities of Spirit

- Compassion
- Curiosity
- Respectful
- Reflective
- Reliable
- Trustworthy
- Trusting
- Seek to understand
- Look for patterns
- Interject humor
- Be intentional
- Assume positive intent
- Collaborative
- Admit mistakes
- Slow down
- Comfortable not knowing
- Try on new perspectives
- See others as human
- Lift others up
- Kindness
- Focus on learning
- Go outside your comfort zone
- Speak your truth
- Be present to self and others
- *Other qualities that are not listed*

Our Unique Qualities



Self Reflection:

- Look at the list for one minute.
- Identify a quality of spirit that you bring into spaces regularly.

Share:

- The quality of spirit you bring into spaces.
- How do you believe that quality impacts others around you?



Learning Goals:

- ① Examine how adaptive community leadership strategies can improve your family engagement, MTSS, and inclusive practices implementation processes
- ② Explore tools you can use to engage and partner with families and community partners in system change work
- ③ Introduce the Community Conversation Toolkit



Schools as a System



THINK
ABOUT
THINGS
DIFFERENTLY

System change work is exciting and exhausting... and ESSENTIAL

- ① Many people and organizations are involved and may be pushed beyond capacity.
- ② Competing values or priorities.
- ③ Lasting change requires addressing technical and adaptive challenges.

“

The most common leadership mistake is treating adaptive challenges as if they were technical problems.

”

Ron Heifetz, Founder Center for Public Leadership, Harvard's Kennedy School



Adaptive Challenges

- ⇒ Adaptive challenges involve changing complex systems and the behaviors of those in that system.
- ⇒ They require leaders to work with, and learn from, the various shareholders involved.

Technical Problems

vs

Adaptive Challenges

- Easy to identify
- Often lend themselves to quick and easy solutions
- Often can be solved by an authority or expert
- Require a change in just one or a few places; often contained within organizational/ system boundaries
- People are generally receptive to technical solutions
- Obstacles are usually resource-limited, i.e. time and money

- Difficult to identify
- Tied to deeper patterns or dynamics and requires learning
- Require changes in values, beliefs, roles, relationships, & approaches
- People impacted by the problem help design the solution
- Require a change in numerous places; usually across organizational/ system boundaries
- “Solutions” require learning, trying ideas, and new discoveries; they take longer to implement

A Systems Thinking Approach

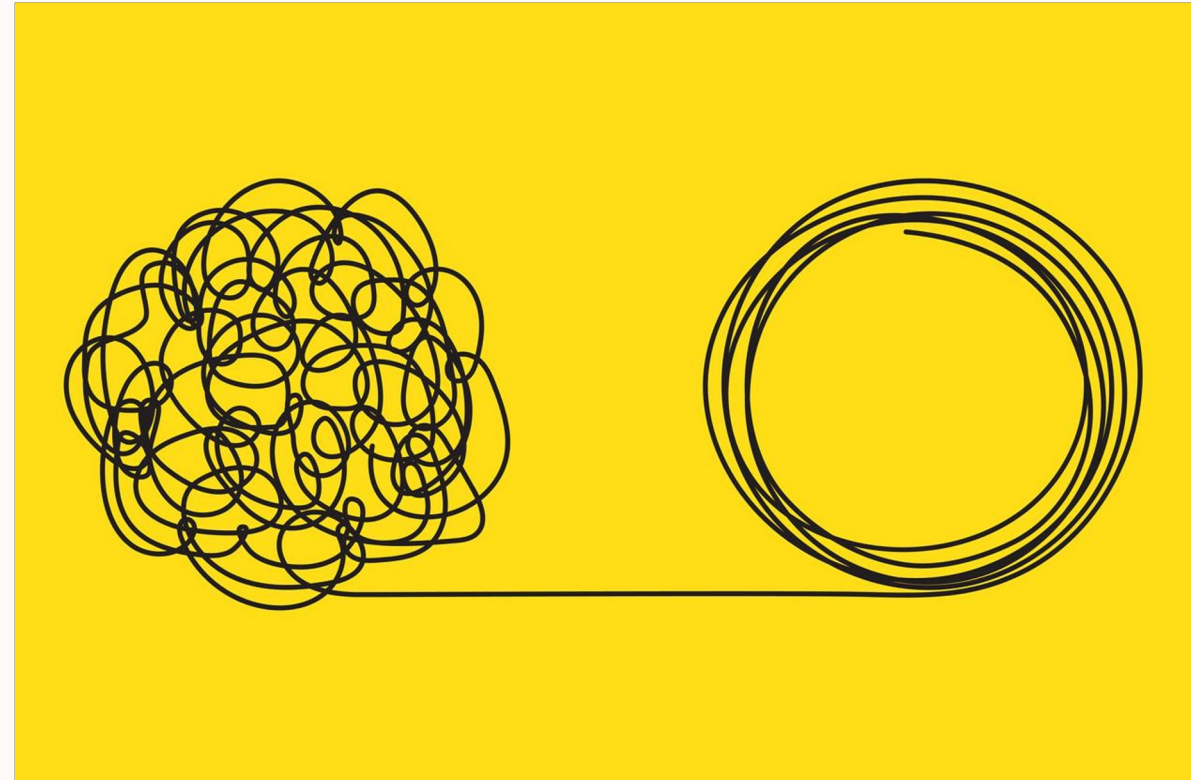
Every system is perfectly aligned to produce its current outcomes.



- Systems work hard to remain stable and protect the status quo.
- People behave in ways that support the system even if unintentional.
- Systems do not operate with simple cause and effect.

An Invitation to the Balcony

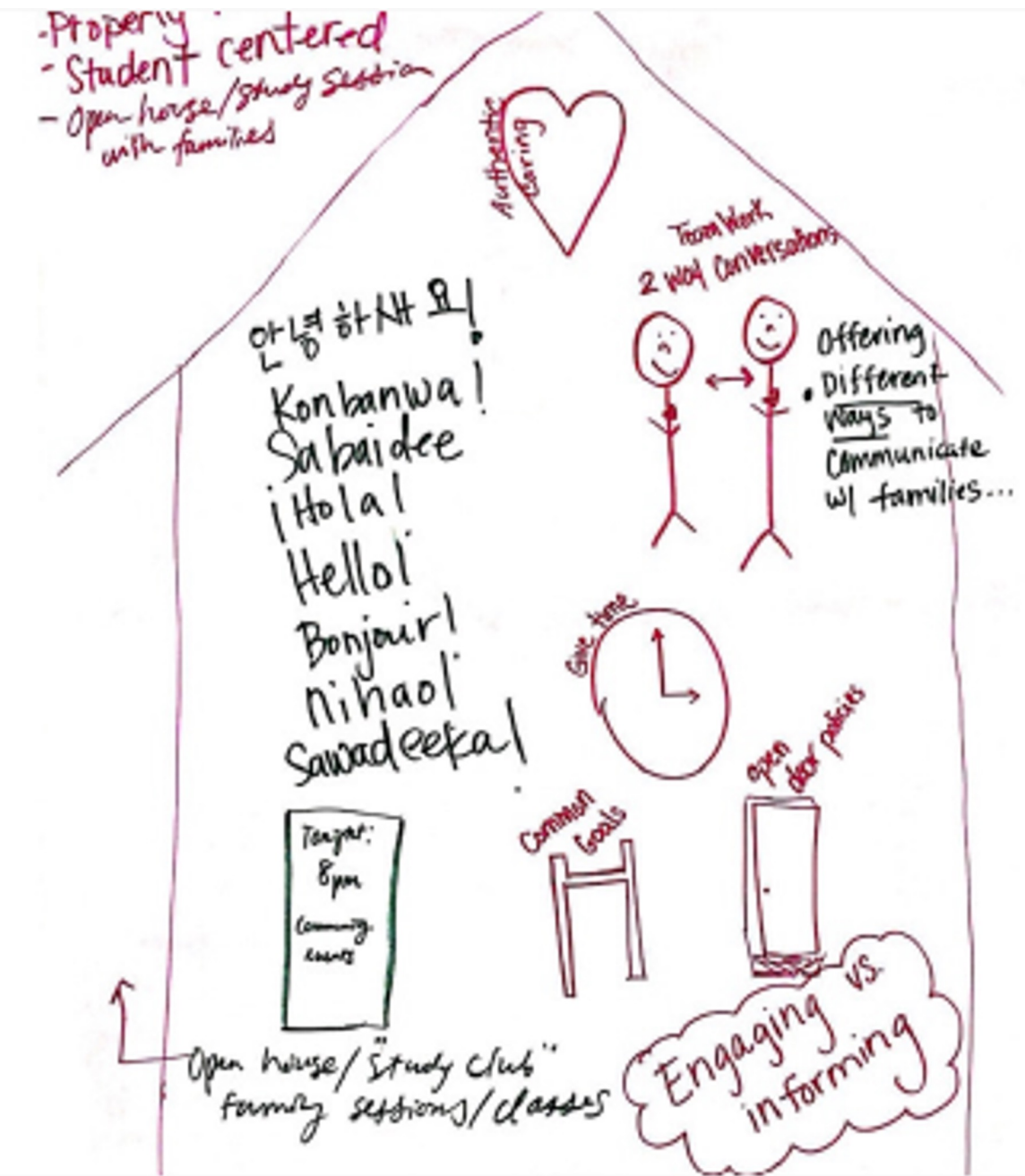
- It is valuable for all partners in systems to "get on the balcony" about their own thoughts and actions.
- It is an approach to problem-solving, allowing for viewing challenges in context and as part of an overall system.





The Community Conversation Toolkit

Community Conversations are a proven method for gathering and analyzing qualitative data – information gathered by talking to people about their experiences and perspectives.



A Community Conversation is an event that brings a diverse set of community members together to listen, learn, and collectively brainstorm strategies and resources that can be used to address an adaptive challenge facing their community.



Community Conversation Toolkit

A guide for educators, families, and communities to
build relationships and work together for change

Published 2024



The Community Conversation Toolkit includes:

Guidance document

13 appendices

Interactive tools

Resources

Community Conversation Toolkit Themes

- Inclusion Takes a Community
- Building Belonging, Together





Focus on strengths

Appreciative
Inquiry



Allow for multiple perspectives to
be expressed



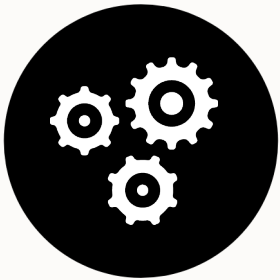
Avoid simple yes or no answers

Open and
Clean
Questions

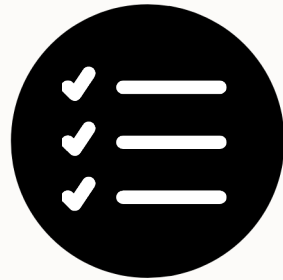


Allow people to take an opportunity
to think and reflect on their answer

Core Elements of Community Conversations:



System
Mapping



Designing
for access



Building a
space of
belonging



Harvesting
and follow
up

System Mapping

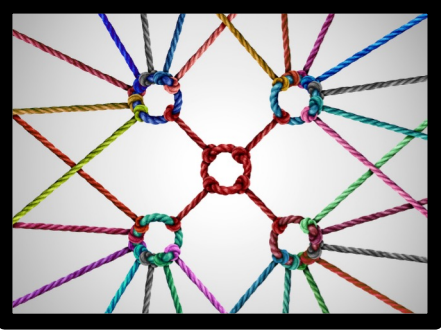
A process we use to examine our community and identify who we need to be engaging in our system change work

Understanding Systems in Schools



PEOPLE

The individuals in the system that affect how that system functions. Ensuring that all the people impacted are included in the change.



RELATIONSHIPS

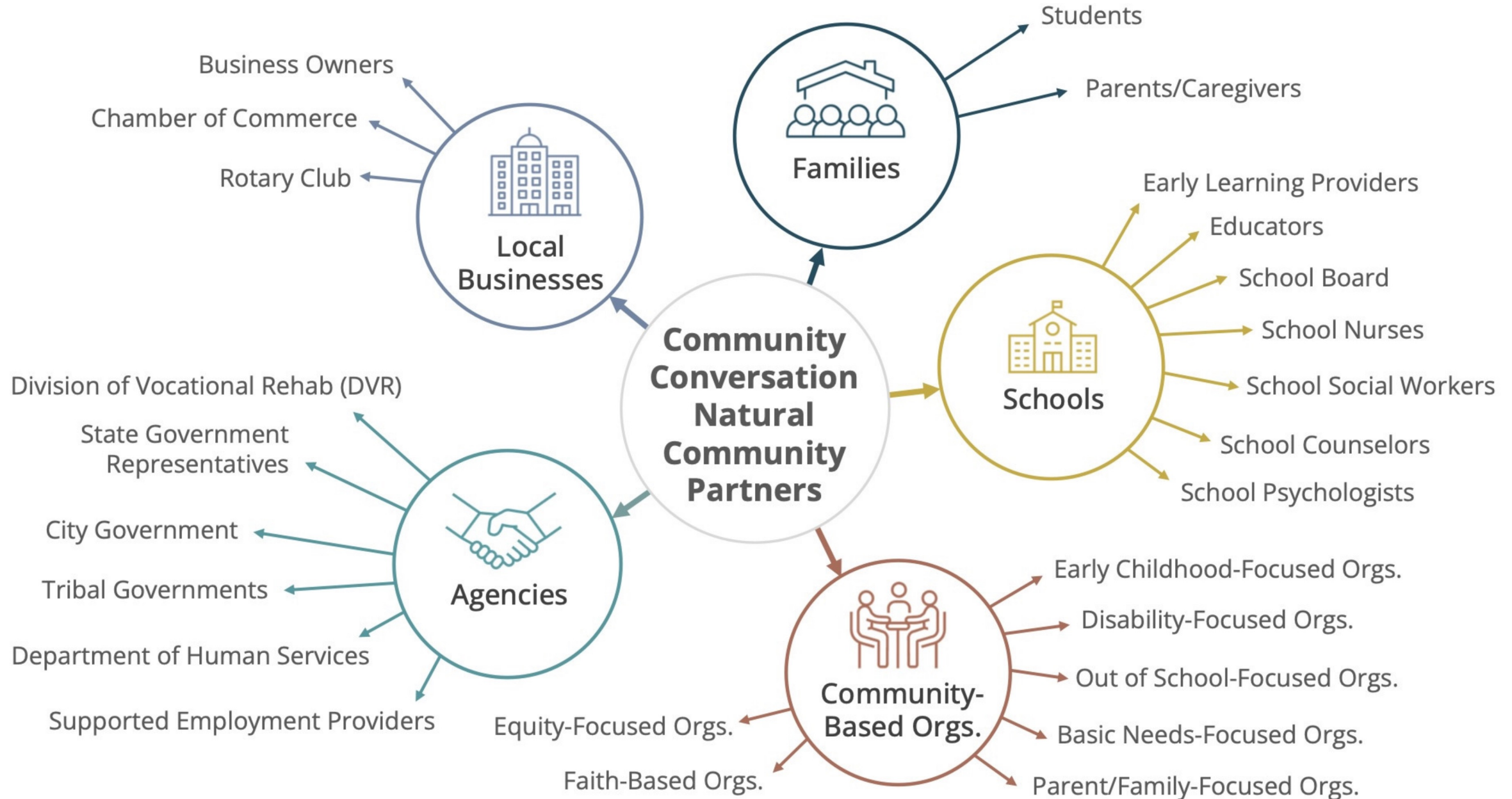
The relationships that need to be in place to affect systems change. Simply changing individuals in a system and leaving existing relationships at play will not impact change.



RULES AND STRUCTURES

The rules and structures at work in a system, either explicit or implicit, that reinforce the status quo in the system must be understood and examined.

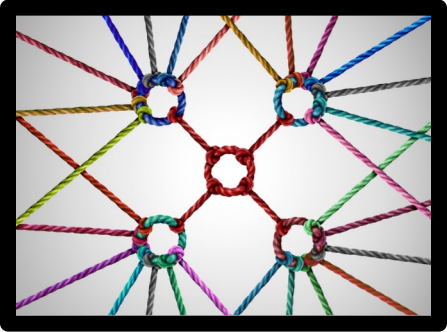
Community Conversation Mapping Tool



System Mapping → Point of Partnership



PEOPLE



RELATIONSHIPS



RULES AND
STRUCTURES





When you think about partnerships that you have had in your own life, what words come to mind that describe those partnerships?

What spirit do you bring to a new partnership?

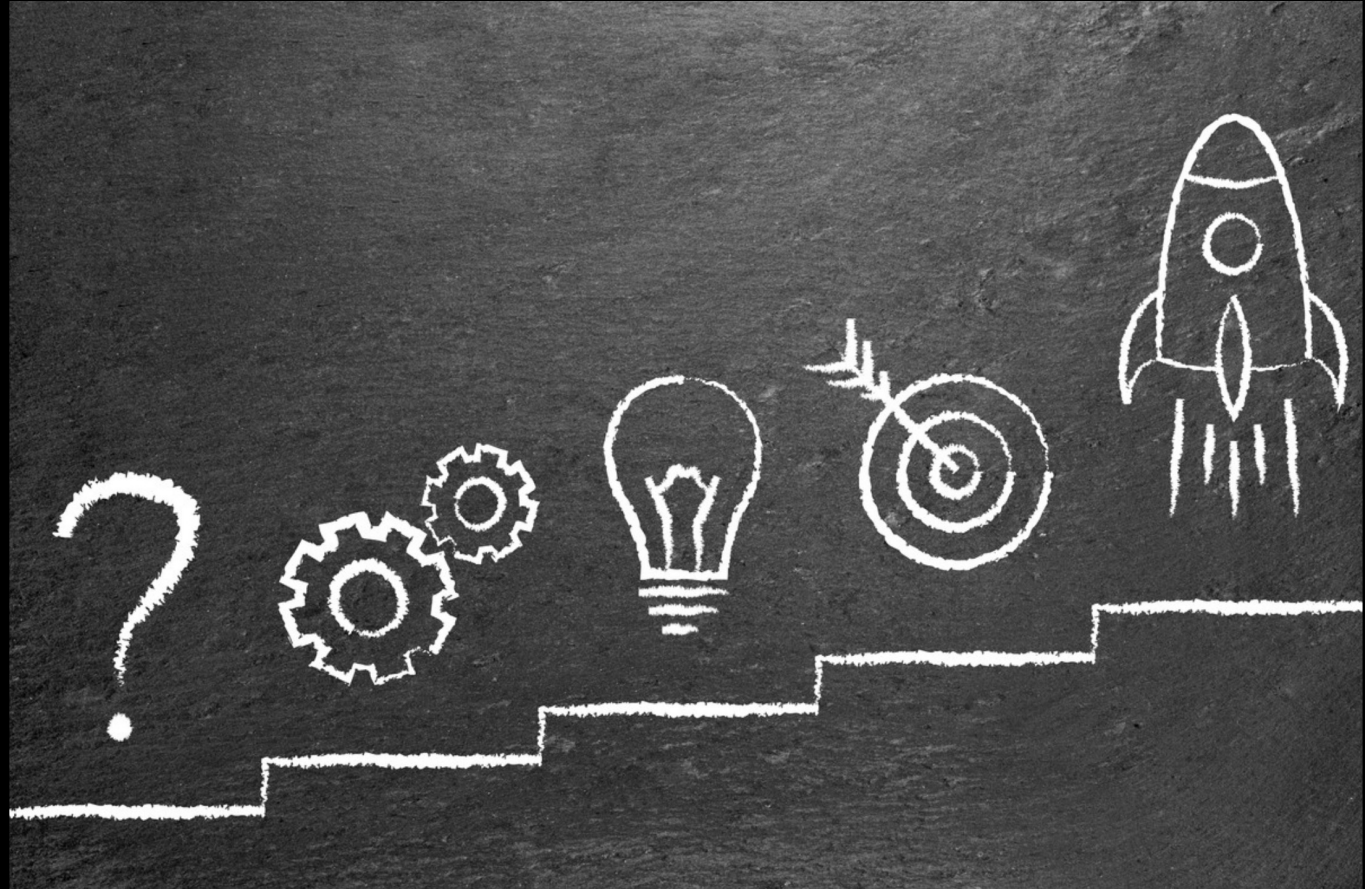
Point of Partnership

Creating a table (committee, team, structure) where people most impacted by an issue partner with people with authority in the system to build a shared definition of success.



Shared Definition of Success

- Collaboration in defining a shared definition of success is a key piece of equity and inclusion
- Equity and inclusion require that we understand others' definition of success, not impose a definition on anyone, particularly those with less power in the system
- By creating a shared definition of success, we can determine processes to overcome barriers to reaching success



For years, research has shown that strong family-school partnerships improve student outcomes.

Many studies confirm that strong parent-teacher relationships relate to positive student outcomes such as healthy social development, high student achievement, and high rates of college enrollment.

Working Together to Build Belonging

Community

Create a community where we embrace and honor differences. People show up as their authentic selves.



Learning

Consider how we can best listen to and learn from each other, especially when individuals do not feel connected.



Responsibility

We have a personal and shared responsibility to express what we need to work together to solve problems and reach common goals.



Relationships

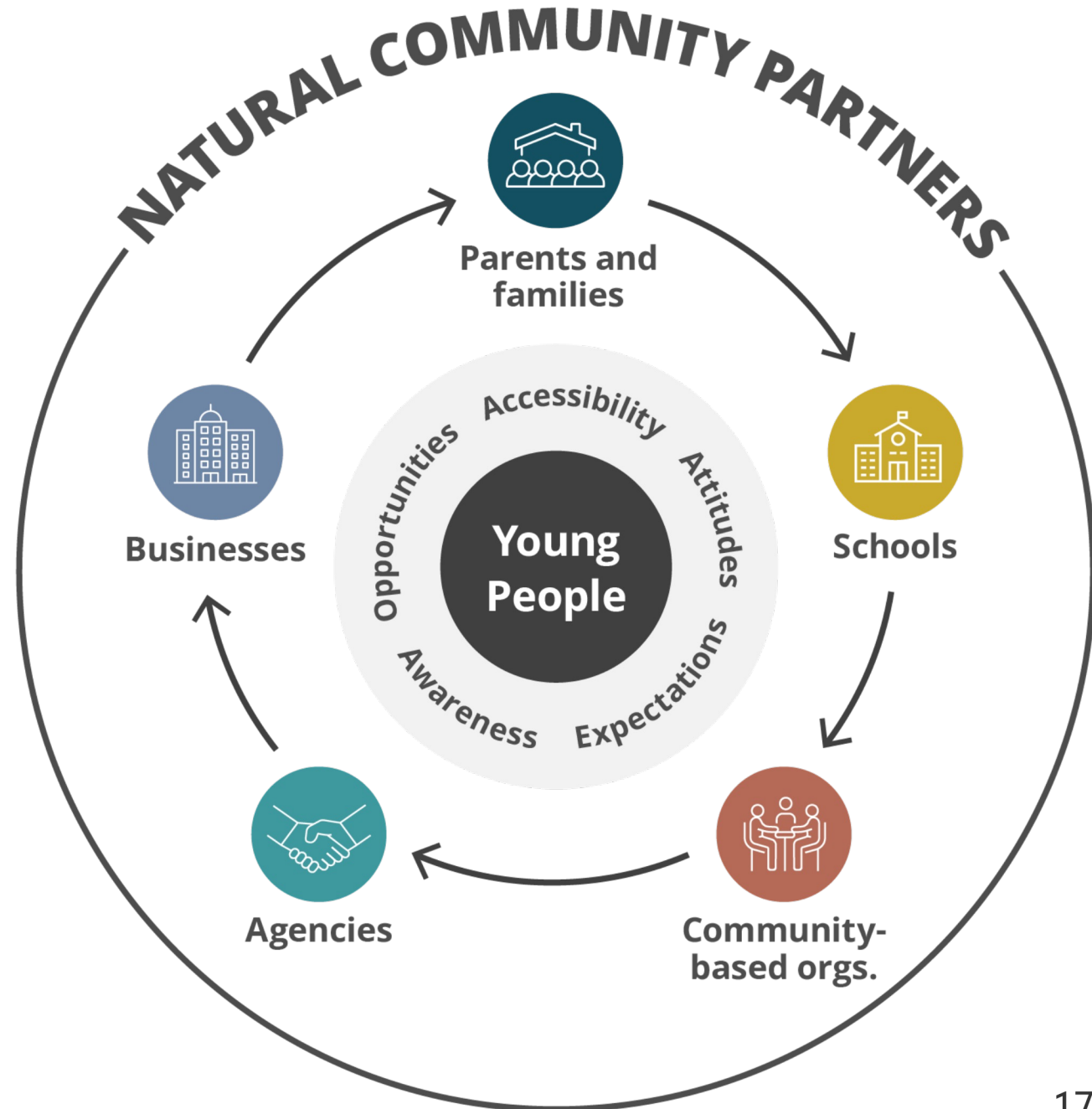
Relationships matter. Especially when we disagree. Consider how we can best build, repair, and maintain relationships.



It Takes A Community

Communities are made up of many interconnected systems

Each system is made up of natural community partners: people who have an interest in or are impacted by an issue in the system



A close-up photograph of a small, vibrant green plant with several serrated leaves growing out of a deep crack in a weathered, grey-brown wooden log. The log's surface is heavily textured with cracks and ridges, suggesting age and decay. The plant's growth from the crack symbolizes resilience and the ability to thrive in challenging or established environments.

Building a Container

- Holds the complexity of work
- Strengthening connections
- Allow for meaningful dialogue and collaboration

Gracious Space
helps us tend to the
container and
strengthen it so our
work is successful,
and we can thrive





Gracious Space is a proven facilitation framework that allows for:

- Building a container to developing relationships
- Tending to and strengthening relationships
- Learning from different perspectives on an issue
- Handling conflict in a productive manner

Gracious Space

Creating a Foundation of Belonging



Spirit

Our Way of Being

How we invite
people to join the
conversation



Setting

Physical Space

Creating spaces
where everyone
feels welcome



Belonging

Embrace Diversity

Seek and be open
to different
perspectives



Learn in Public

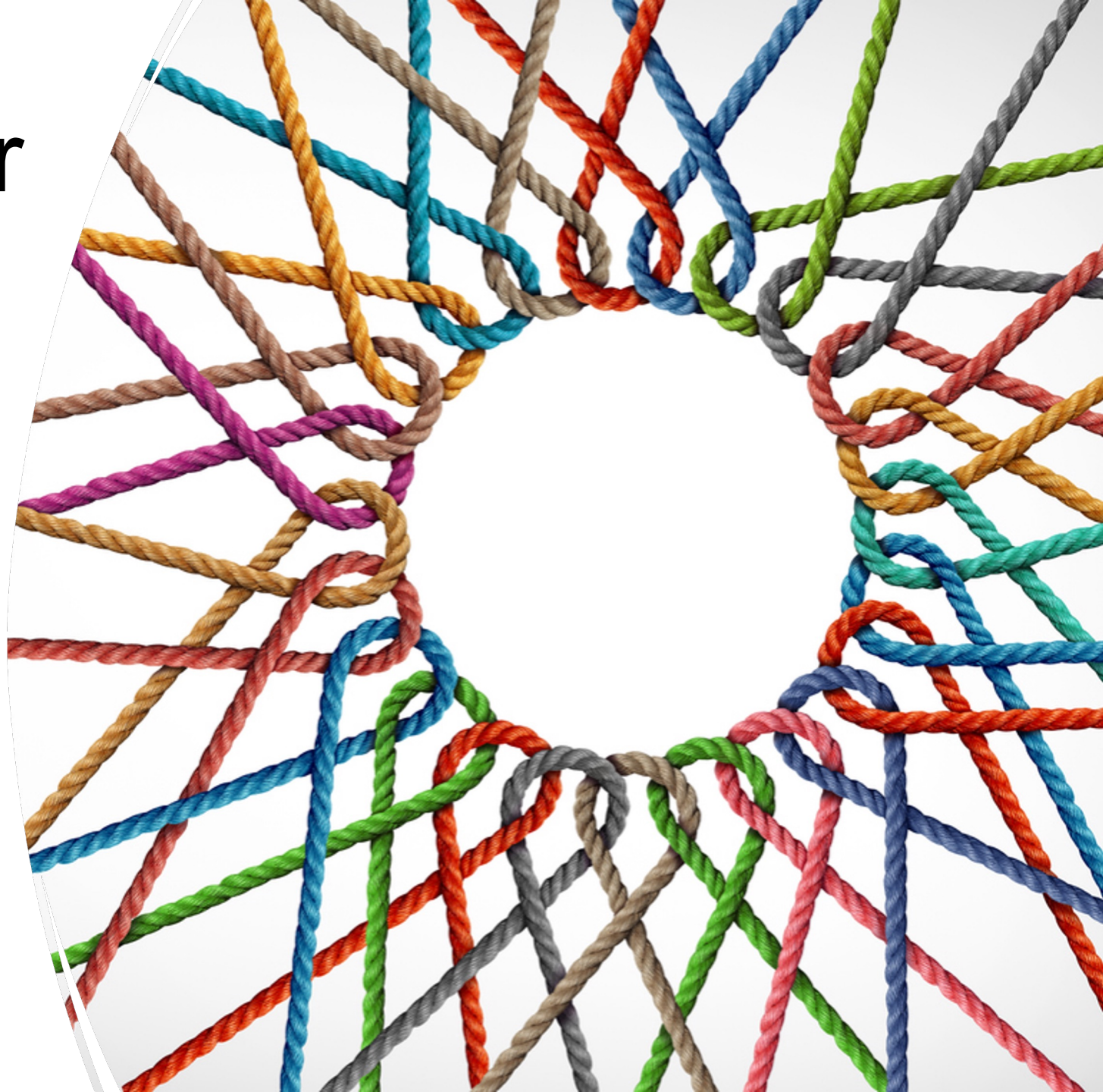
Challenge
Assumptions

Be curious about
assumptions and
willing to learn

A Foundation for System Change

Attend to centering

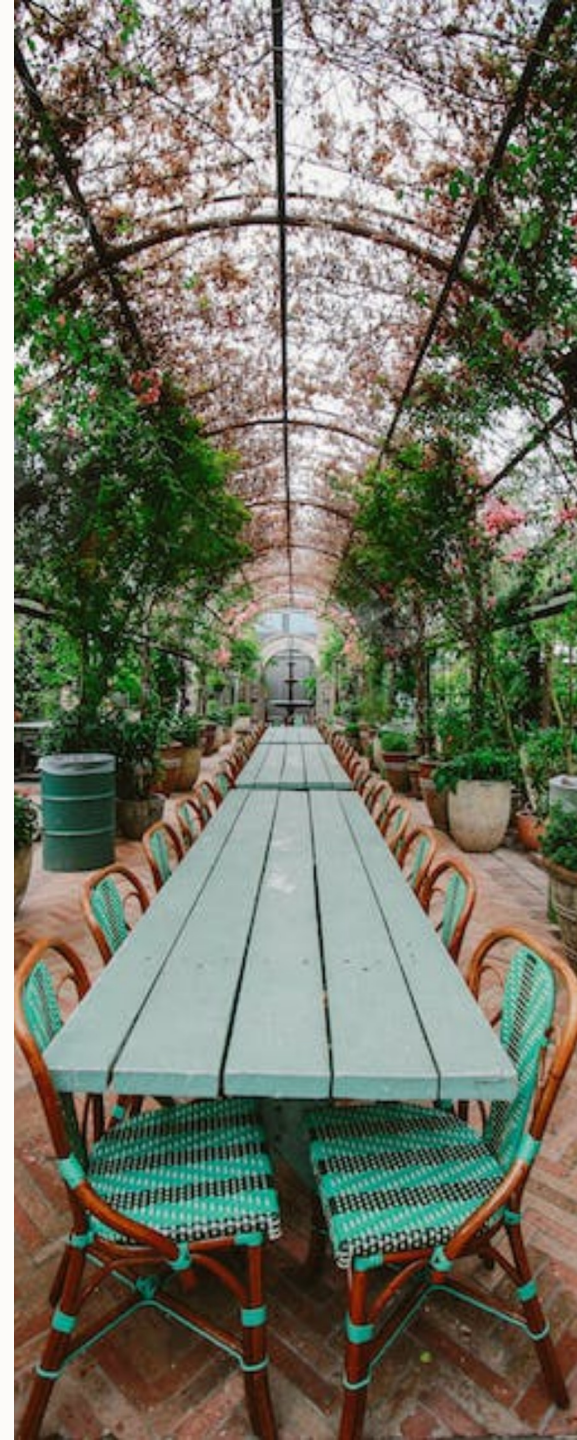
- Compassion
- Shared Humanity
- Bridging Relationships



A Space for Collaboration

Gracious Space amplifies your effectiveness through:

- Building trust and relationships
- Creating space for collaboration and partnerships
- Opportunity for creativity and innovation
- Shared ownership and problem-solving
- Civil discourse



Embracing Diversity

- Bringing together a broad group of people connected to the issue
- Intentionality about how we are planning for and holding conflict
- Building spaces where people can feel trust



Learning in Public

Being curious about our own assumptions and willing to learn alongside others





Community Conversation Video Training Modules:

- Understanding Systems
- Gracious Space
- Accessible Meetings and Events
- Introducing the Inclusionary Practices Community Conversation Toolkit



Questions?

Reach out to us at info@rootsofinclusion.org

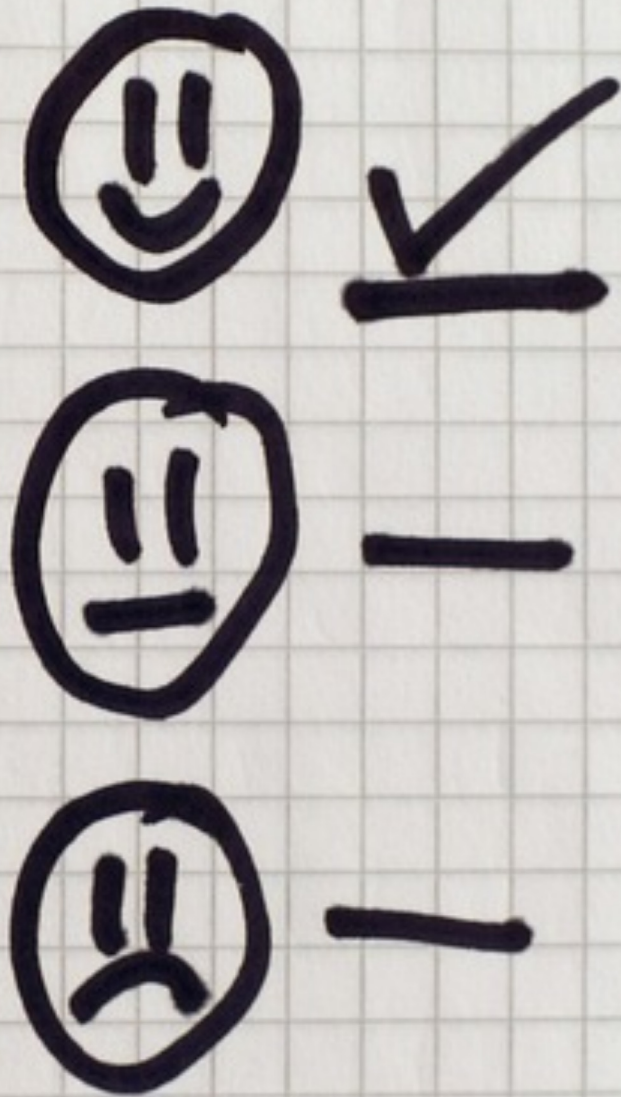
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ROOTS OF
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Please Share Your Feedback
With Us:

Evaluation Link:

<https://forms.gle/SN2U5cumwypALPCH7>



Resources

- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322841177_Community_Conversation_as_a_Method_of_Gathering_and_Analyzing_Qualitative_Data/link/5a8c8d2faca27292c0f8228b/download?_tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6Il9kaXJlY3QiLCJwYWdlIjoicHVibGljYXRpb24ifX0
- Center for Ethical Leadership:
<https://www.ethicaleadership.org/gracious-space.html>