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Connection as Currency

Building Trust & Belonging in Schools

happy
families.
SCHOOLS

Overview

The Connection

Gap

Schools have optimised for efficiency and
accidentally optimised out humanity.

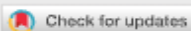


The nature of connection: parents' experiences with school social media

Tiffani Apps , Karley Beckman , Nataszia Pawlicka  & Paul Kidson 

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary schools have embraced the use of social media platforms, such as Facebook, to connect with parents, students, and the broader community. Despite an established body of critical research that highlights the power of platforms to shape social practice, there is a paucity of research that considers the impacts of school social media practice. This study employs a practice theory lens to examine school social media as practice with a focus on the platform together with the everyday situated experiences of parents. Through in-depth qualitative case studies, the paper aims to understand the experiences of six Australian parents as they manoeuvre within and across school, home and platform fields. Data were collected from an online questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and social media walkthroughs. Key findings highlighted tensions rather than connections at the intersection of home, school and social media. The obfuscated logic of the platform and limited space for parents to enact protective strategies within school structures amplified these tensions. The increasing concerns surrounding social media platforms and their impact on society, including the participants within this study, highlight the need for greater attention to the subtle ways in which schools, parents and children are implicated under the guise of connection.

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Just like dollars are the currency
of our economy, connection is
the currency of our relationships

Connection is feeling...



SEEN



HEARD

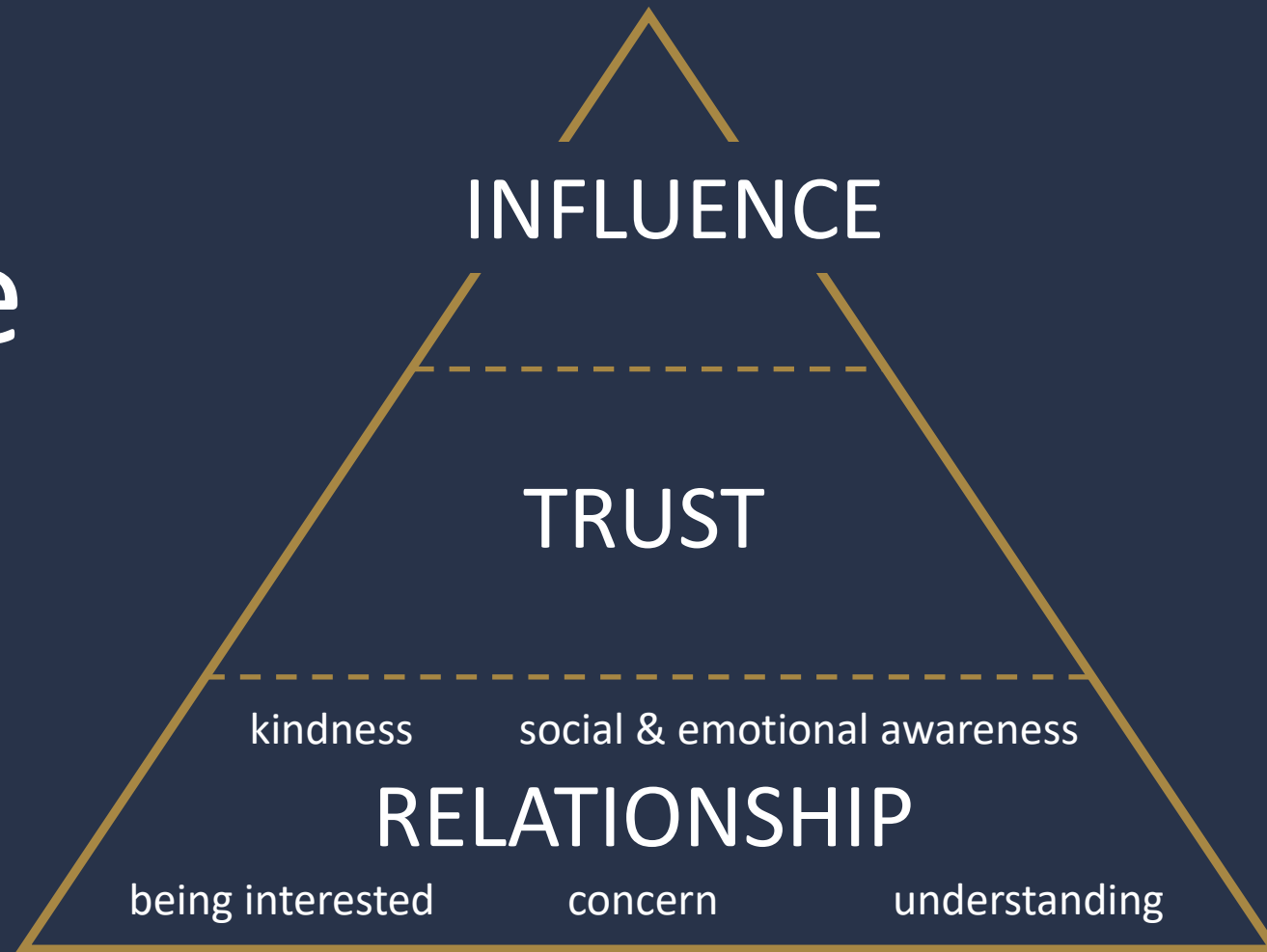


VALUED

Trust is....

Believing that another
person will act in your best
interests.

the
Trust
Triangle



#1

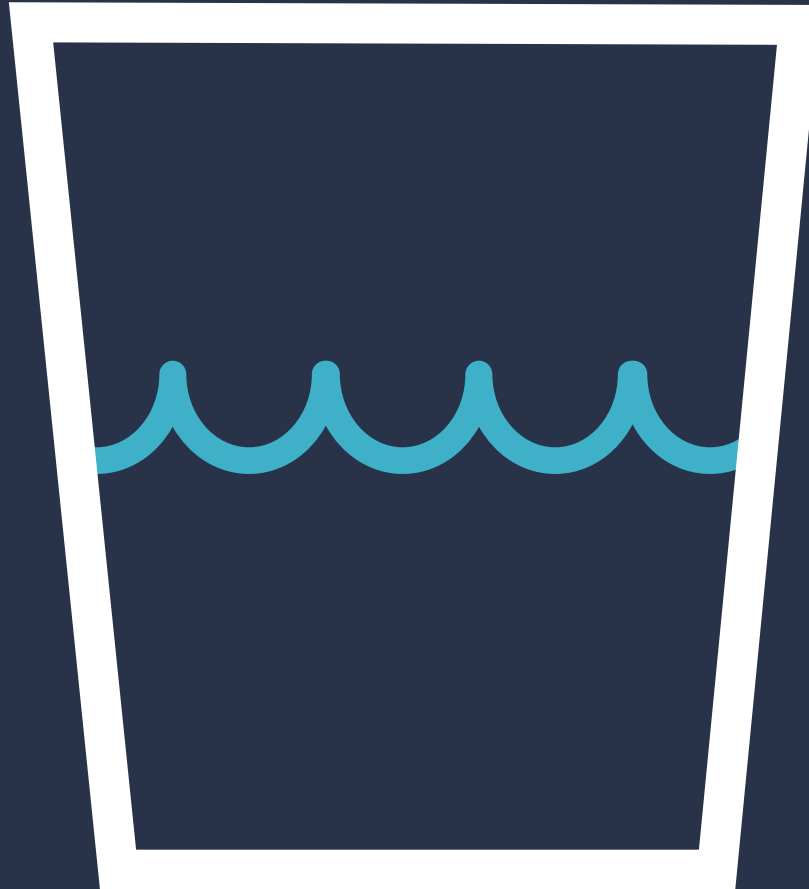
Relatedness is a
fundamental fuel

The principal's primary job is creating and protecting
the relational conditions where high quality
education becomes possible.



You can't build
relationships by
watching the clock

connection



correction &
direction

problem-focus & compliance-
driven



What are your school's positive connection touchpoints?

Those that occur outside of the classroom?

What are the connection rituals that are part of the school's DNA?

Principal

Chief Relatedness Officer (CRO)

#2

The Trust Equation

(Covey)

$$\text{Trust} = \frac{\text{Credibility}}{\text{Self-Orientation}}$$

Self-Orientation

Judged by friends, shamed by staff: How 'revenge porn' left a teenager paying the price for years

By Leonie Thorne

Online Abuse

Wed 11 Sep



Anna (not her real name) says she was "slut shamed" by her school. (ABC News: Sharon Gordon)

aturday Paper
mselves, is not
iour of

In short:

A teenager was "punished" by her school and blocked from running for school captain after her ex-boyfriend shared her intimate images with their classmates.

Experts say the case is a common example of image-based abuse, where young women often face "victim blaming" and judgement.

What's next?

Victims want to see schools and police to create better frameworks for responding to image-based abuse.

How this plays out in schools...



Building Credibility

- Demonstrate you understand the actual challenges teachers face
- Make decisions based on what's best for learning, not what's easiest administratively
- Admit when you don't know something rather than pretending

Building Reliability

- Do what you say you'll do
 - *If you say you'll get back to someone by Friday, do it*
- Be consistent in how you handle similar situations with different people
- Follow through on promised resources, support, or changes

Building Intimacy

(Professional Safety)

- Share appropriate vulnerability about your own challenges
- Never use someone's honesty against them in evaluations or decisions
- Create spaces where people can express real concerns without retribution

- Ask "Who does this serve?" before making decisions
- Take responsibility when things go wrong instead of deflecting
- Make decisions that might be harder for you but better for your community

Reducing Self-Orientation

#3

Connection is a
Social Contagion





NeuroImage

Volume 264, 1 December 2022, 119677



Technologically-assisted communication attenuates inter-brain synchrony

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The researchers measured mother-child brain-to-brain synchrony during live and technologically-assisted remote interaction.

The **live interaction** elicited **9 cross-brain links** between densely inter-connected frontal and temporal areas in the beta range.

The **remote** interaction yielded **only 1 significant cross-brain cross-hemisphere link**.

Brain-behaviour associations emerged only during the live interaction.

Further research should examine the cost of social technology to brain maturation, particularly among youth.



I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am
the decisive element in the classroom.

It's my personal approach that creates the
climate. It's my daily mood that makes the
weather.

As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to
make a child's life miserable or joyous.



I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of
inspiration.
I can humiliate or heal.

In all situations, it is my response that decides
whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated
and a child humanized or dehumanized.

HAIM GINOTT

Practical Applications

Start Monday

Immeditate:

1. THE "CONNECTION BEFORE CORRECTION" PROTOCOL

- Every difficult conversation starts with genuine relational check-in

2. "ANALOG ANCHORS"

Protect Human Moments

- Designate specific times/spaces where devices are set aside
- Morning "connection rounds" - 5 minutes of genuine human check-ins, not task checking

3. THE THREE UNIVERSAL QUESTIONS

Apply to Every Interaction

- What would help this person feel seen?
- What would help them feel heard?
- What would help them feel valued?

System Changes

(Implement this term)

4. "RELATEDNESS AUDIT" YOUR CURRENT PRACTICES

- Map where connection naturally happens vs. where it's systematically prevented
- Every policy decision gets filtered through: "How does this impact relatedness?"

5. "MICRO-DOSING CONNECTION"

- Brief but consistent relational moments scattered throughout the day

Culture Shifts

6. "THE CONNECTION MULTIPLIERS"

- What are the connection multipliers – small acts with outsized relationship impact?
- Consciously allocate and protect "connection time" like you manage financial budgets
- Recognize that investing in staff relationships multiplies outward to student and family relationships

7. REFRAME DISCIPLINE THROUGH RELATEDNESS

- Relationship repair becomes more important than rule enforcement
- Connection equity - ensure relational investment reaches those who don't demand attention

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