

Training Tools to Support **BHERO** SCHOOLS

“Relationships are a basic human need. Educators have to have relationships with students before learning can occur. Without a relationship, engaging in academics, like reading and math, is difficult.”

– Sheila Schlafmann, Superintendent, Turtle Lake-Mercer Public School

HARVARD RELATIONSHIP-MAPPING PROTOCOL FEATURING TURTLE LAKE-MERCER PUBLIC SCHOOL

DEVELOPED BY:
Harvard Graduate School of Education

INCEPTION:
2004

COST:

The Relationship Mapping Protocol is available online for free through the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Please see the “Get Involved” section of this artifact to learn more. The Central Regional Education Association (CREA) offers facilitation of this process, interpretation of the results, and support to establish an action plan as a fee-based service for ND schools.

BH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING CATEGORY:

Other evidence-based strategies to reduce risk factors for students

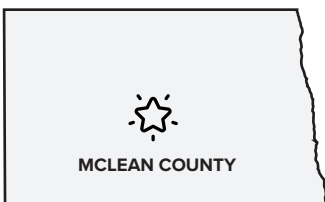
Find all Behavioral Health Professional Development Training Categories in North Dakota state law, NDCC 15.1-07-34.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE:

For students, a positive connection to at least one adult at school—whether it is a teacher, counselor, coach, or other staff member—has the proven ability to increase school connectedness, lower drop-out rates, improve social capital, and contribute to psychological safety—feeling safe at school. Relationship Mapping is a simple but meaningful process that is designed to help educators identify students who could benefit from supportive relationships with additional adults in school and help connect every student with at least one trusting and supportive staff member.

IMPLEMENTATION JOURNEY— TURTLE LAKE-MERCER PUBLIC SCHOOL

DISTRICT ENROLLMENT
180



Turtle Lake-Mercer Public School is a rural, single-building district serving 180 students in grades Pre-K through 12. During the 21-22 school year, the district advanced their efforts to identify areas in which they could better serve their students through a school improvement process. School staff selected one of four identified critical initiatives to research, plan, implement and evaluate local implementation of evidence-based practices. With guidance from the Central Regional Education Association (CREA), the School Climate and Culture Critical Initiative Team selected the Harvard Relationship Mapping Protocol, a strategy for improving relationships between students and their adult mentors.

“Because we are a small school, we made a lot of assumptions about how well we knew our students and how supported they were in school, but we had never really looked at the data,” said Superintendent Sheila Schlafmann. “With Relationship Mapping, we have data to better understand these relationships [that students build with staff], and we can use that data to make sure that nobody is slipping through the cracks.”

The Relationship Mapping protocol empowers educators to identify students who may lack a connection with a trusted adult in the school building and match them with a supportive mentor who can help them navigate academic and personal challenges.

“You have to have relationships before learning can occur. If those basic needs aren’t met for students, then things like reading and math will continue to be a struggle for them,” Schlafmann said.

BHERO

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

WHO WE ARE.

A group of educators and advocates passionate about the importance of behavioral health in our schools and communities.

To identify students who could benefit from an intentional connection with a supportive adult, the critical initiative team at Turtle Lake-Mercer Public School created two binders: one for elementary students, and one for secondary students. Next, all faculty and staff members participated in “mapping” by placing a green dot next to the picture and name of a student that they believed they have a positive, trusting relationship with and whom they believed would come to them if they needed additional support in or out of the classroom. They then placed red dots next to the pictures and names of students whom they believed could use additional support for academic, personal, or behavioral reasons.

From this process, the critical initiative team selected 37 students who exhibited the greatest need for a positive adult mentor. Each of these students was paired with at least one staff member who would be responsible for watching out for them and fostering a relationship.

Kindergarten teacher Courtney Volochenko and high school math teacher Diane Cullum, members of the school culture and climate critical initiative team, have played an integral role in implementing the Relationship Mapping Protocol. Despite initial hesitation from some staff, Volochenko says that the protocol has been widely embraced at Turtle Lake-Mercer Public School.

“As teachers, we all end up with so much on our plates. Any time you add one more thing, people are naturally going to be hesitant,” she said. “But the more we’ve gotten into this, the more success stories we have seen. We’ve all realized that this isn’t going to be as daunting as we originally thought.”

GET INVOLVED

The Relationship Mapping Protocol can be implemented at multiple levels—within a whole school district, single school building, or individual grade level. Harvard Graduate School provides schools with both a virtual and in-person option for conducting their protocol. CREA can assist schools as they implement Relationship Mapping by leading facilitation and providing school contacts with the necessary tools they need to move their school through this process.

To learn more about the Harvard Relationship Mapping Protocol and implement this strategy at your school, please contact Laura Haynie:

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SUCCESS STORIES

As a result of engaging in the protocol, Cullum volunteered to become a trusted adult for 2 elementary students. She now spends her mornings before school in the elementary wing of the school. She has implemented relationship-building practices such as the 2x10 strategy, in which she commits to meeting with each student for two minutes every day, ten days in a row.

“I get to know the students on a different level,” Cullum said. “I am their go-to person in the school. They know that if they ever need anything, I can help.”

Cullum has witnessed first-hand the impact that this intentional relationship-building has had on students, including one young man who experienced frequent behavioral and disciplinary issues in the first semester. One particular mistake meant that the student would not be able to go on a special field trip with his class. While discussing this issue with the boy’s teacher, Cullum realized that disciplining the student through further isolation did not align with the Relationship Mapping principles.

“We took it upon ourselves to ask the administration to give him a second chance, and they did,” Cullum said. “That student has improved his entire outlook. He’s more confident. He doesn’t give up, because he knows that there are people on his side.”



B-HERO Technical Assistance Center is a collaborative effort between Central Regional Education Association and the Department of Human Services, Behavioral Health Division.