

CHAPTER NINE: CREATING RELATIONSHIPS

Payne begins this chapter by stating again that relationships are a primary resource in the culture of poverty. Because of this, she believes that creating relationships is key to achievement for students in poverty.

But, how does a formal institution create relationships? Two sources are (1) The recent research in the field of science and (2) the work Steven Covey has done with personal effectiveness.

Payne quotes Margaret Wheatley's statements about scientists' questioning whether we can continue to explain how the world works using Sir Issac Newton's 17th century model based on the machine, which requires one to think in terms of parts and things. On the other hand, the prevailing, 20th century theory of reality, strikes many people, including scientists as being bizarre. This model, quantum physics, reveals "a world where relationship is the key determiner of what is observed and of how particles manifest themselves. ... Many scientists now work with the concepts of fields - invisible forces that structure space or behavior." In this view the world is intangible, as well as tangible. Fields are invisible, yet they are the substance of the universe. Wheatly concludes that, according to quantum theory, in "organizations what is always critical is the relationship created between the person and the setting. That relationship will always be different, will always evoke different potentialities. It all depends on the players and the moment."

Teachers and administrators have always understood that relationships are central to what might happen in a building. But since 1980, when we in education began to concentrate particular parts of education, such as "achievement" and "effective teaching strategies," we have returned to the Newtonian approach to teaching. We have made this return contrary research that shows that the most important part of learning seems to be related to relationships. Students who have made the transitions from poverty to middle class say this movement was the result of a relationship with a teacher, a counselor, or a coach.

A successful relationship is made when emotional deposits are made by the adult to the student, emotional withdrawals are avoided and students are respected. Of course, boundaries must be set in the relationships, but in a relationship that will enhance learning students must be treated as human beings who are worthy of respect and care.

The deposits and withdrawals regarding students from poverty display a different set of values, which must be understood if the adult is to establish a relationship with a student in poverty.

Organizations and schools build relationships through support systems, through caring about students, by promoting achievement, by being role models, by

insisting upon successful behaviors for schools. Support systems are simply networks of relationships. No one will be able to establish relationships students that will make them all successful. But with practice, over time we will be able to reach more and more students.