ACT!ON
FOR HEALTHY KIDS

WHO CAN BE TRUSTED?
A Review of the Literature on Trustworthy Adults

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Action for Healthy Kids conducted a literature review to inform the development of *TrustEd,* a training curriculum designed to equip adults to build trusting relationships with youth, with the goal of preventing youth use of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS). The literature review focused on identifying the characteristics of trusted adults, the barriers and strategies in building trusted relationships, and additional factors impacting youths' relationships with trusted adults. The population of focus was young people aged 11 to 19 and the adults who engage with them, with specific interest in youth that live in limited-income households, identify as BIPOC, or identify as LGBTQIA+. The search was limited to peer-reviewed, English-language articles published between 2014 and 2024. Findings included ten *Trusted Adult Principles* that describe trusted adult ways of being, as well as considerations and strategies for building trusted relationships based on youth identity and the context of the relationship. The *Trusted Adult Principles* found in the literature are below:

Trusted Adults:

1. Are consistently present
2. Demonstrate personal interest and pursue connection
3. Practice open communication and active listening
4. Are non-judgmental and patient
5. Create relationships with mutual respect, trust, and vulnerability
6. Are fair, set expectations, and maintain confidentiality
7. Understand and believe lived experience
8. Provide warm, caring emotional support
9. Share power and use authority to help
10. Have high expectations and offer practical support

PURPOSE

The purpose of this literature review was to support a larger needs assessment focused on identifying the characteristics and behaviors of trusted adults, the barriers youth experience in building trusted adult relationships, potential solutions to lessen the barriers, and the additional factors impacting young people's relationships with trusted adults. The findings will inform the development of the *TrustEd* training curriculum. Below are the needs assessment questions:

1. How do youth describe the characteristics and behaviors of trusted adults?
   a. How does this differ among the various trusted adult roles (i.e. guardians, educators, and other adults)?
2. What are the key barriers to building trusted relationships with youth and what are the potential solutions to lessen the barriers?
3. What additional factors (i.e. physical space, communication methods, culture and values, etc.) impact youth relationships with trusted adults?

METHODS

Population

The review focused on youth who are between the ages of 11 to 19, live in limited-income households, identify as BIPOC, and/or are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. The review also includes adults who engage with youth through familial, social, educational, and organizational relationships.

Search Strategy

The literature review was conducted using Advanced Google Scholar, EBSCO, Wiley Research Libraries, and University of Alabama at Birmingham Library advanced search. Search terms included: youth, adoles*, teen*, young people, young person, middle school, high school, relational practice, trust, relationship, adult, educator, parent, family, mentor, youth-serving professional, facilitator, guardian, teacher, natural mentor, Black, African American, Indigenous, Hispanic, Latin*, BIPOC, low-income, at risk, LGBTQ, Queer, Lesbian, Gay, and Transgender. Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) were used in various combinations to refine the searches. The search was limited to peer-reviewed, English-language articles published between 2014 and 2024. A total of 190 studies were identified. Fourteen duplicates were identified and removed. The remaining 176 studies were screened through a review of titles and abstracts. This resulted in 84 articles identified as relevant to the topic of interest. Further review of the full-text articles led to the identification of 46 studies that best fit the topic of interest and met all previously discussed inclusion criteria. See Figure 1 for a Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) diagram that visually depicts this process.

Figure 1. PRISMA diagram
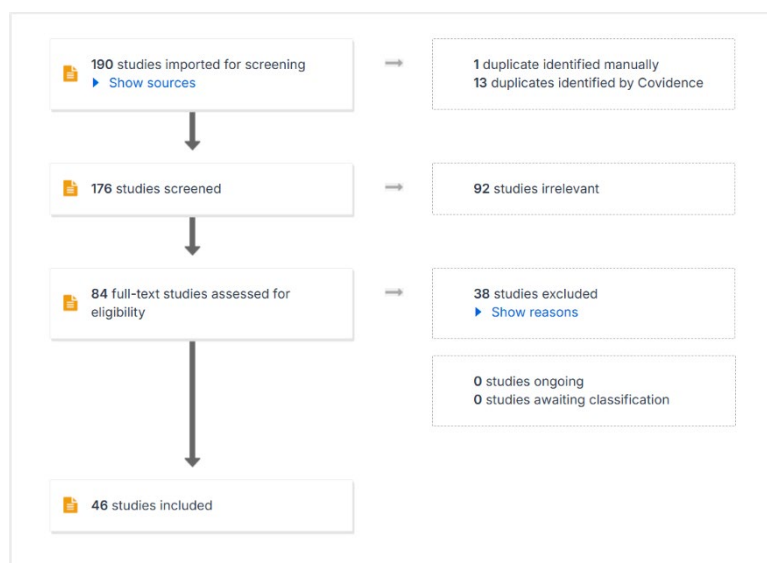
FINDINGS

Themes in the literature included Trusted Adult Principles, Identity Considerations and Strategies and School Context Considerations and Interventions. These themes and subthemes are explored below.

Trusted Adult Principles

Table 1. Trusted Adult Principles

Principle	Description
Principles of Relationship-Building	
Trusted adults are consistently present	Trusted adults are physically or psychologically available on a consistent basis. Longer relationships and more time spent together enable adults and youth to know one another and establish trust. Trusted adults are reliable, persistent, or "always there" even in the face of challenges to the relationship.
Trusted adults demonstrate personal interest and pursue connection	Young people appreciate adults who go "above and beyond" what is expected to show that they care for them. They also want adults to view them as individuals and as more than just their role as "student" or "program participant." Young people build trusting relationships when they perceive that an adult has a genuine interest in and notices them.
Principles of Creating Relational Safety	
Trusted adults practice open communication and active listening	Young people can prefer honest, direct, caring communication from adults. Trusted relationships require active listening from adults, enabling the young person to feel heard.
Trusted adults are non-judgmental and patient	Young people build trust when adults communicate that they do not judge them, showing youth that they are valuable as they are, capable of growth, and respected. Adults who are patient through difficult youth behavior or relational challenges can help young people see they are committed and understanding.
Trusted adults create relationships with mutual respect, trust, and vulnerability	Trusted adults communicate trust in youth by being vulnerable, giving them responsibility, and assuming the best. They also communicate respect by treating young people as equals and "talking with" rather than "down to" them.
Trusted adults are fair, set expectations, and maintain confidentiality	Trusted adults treat others fairly and avoid biased treatment of young people. They set expectations for roles and norms and do not unnecessarily share young people's confidential or personal information.
Understand and believe lived experience	Trusted adults take time to understand young people's unique experiences and needs, making them feel heard and believed. Adults who share lived experience with youth may gain trust more easily. Adults with different backgrounds should communicate awareness of differences and educate themselves.
Principles of Supporting Youth	
Trusted adults provide warm, caring emotional support	Trusted adults are warm, caring, and emotionally available to youth. They create emotionally supportive relationships by being attuned to youth, checking in on them, and responding to young people's needs in appropriate ways.
Trusted adults share power and use authority to help	Trusted adults share power by reducing hierarchy, using youth-driven approaches and supporting youth autonomy in context-appropriate ways. They also use their authority to support, protect, or advocate for young people.
Trusted adults have high expectations and offer practical support	Youth appreciate adults who hold them to a high standard and push them to grow, while also communicating their belief in the young person's potential and supporting them in practical ways to achieve the goal.

Principles of Relationship Building

Trusted adults are consistently present (Always there)

Physical and psychological proximity over time is critical in creating trusting relationships between adults and youth. In a study that looked at the timeline of trust building, it was found that many young people experience a steady increase in trust over time (Griffith, 2016). Young people share that spending time with an adult helps them to trust that adult over time, as it allows them to get to know the adult and assess their trustworthiness (Deutsch et al., 2020; Griffith et al., 2018; Kaufman et al., 2024; Pringle et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2016). Time also enables adults to get to know youth and understand how to best engage and support them (Lewing et al., 2018).

"Time" can include both the length of the relationship and the amount of cumulative time spent together across the relationship (Best & Blakeslee, 2020; Melton et al., 2021). Youth are more likely to trust individuals whom they have known for longer periods (Best & Blakeslee, 2020). For example, young people described trusting their parents for this reason (McElroy-Heltzel et al., 2019).

Multiple studies report that both youth and adults mention spending time together regularly in one another's presence through various activities as a contributor to trust (Duke et al., 2017; Frederick et al., 2023; Moore et al., 2018; Sapiro & Ward, 2020). Adults can build trust with young people by spending time together participating in mutually enjoyable activities (Duke et al., 2017; Frederick et al., 2023; Moore et al., 2018; Sapiro & Ward, 2020). Notably, time and presence does not necessarily have to be physical. Deutsch et al. reported that youth experienced increased trust through email or letter writing – indicating that psychological time and presence can also support the building of trusting relationships (2020).

Conversely, lack of time can lead to less trust. This can include an adult having limited time for physical or psychological proximity to the young person, or a change in the amount of time spent together because of the adult's role, such as teacher or coach (Deutsch et al., 2020).

An important component to adult presence is consistency and reliability, as trust builds when youth feel an adult is "always there for them" (Best & Blakeslee, 2020; Deutsch et al., 2020; Frederick et al., 2023; Griffith & Johnson, 2019). When referring to trusted adults, youth in one study used words like "always" or "never," indicating that consistent action and dependability increased their trust in adults (Griffith, 2016). Across the literature, these types of consistent relationships are referred to as "durable" or adults who "stick" or "hang in there" (Best & Blakeslee, 2020; Lefevre et al., 2017; Moore et al., 2018). This highlights the need for unconditional consistency and persistence on the part of the adult even when faced with external challenges or lack of initial receptivity from the young person (Frederick et al., 2023; Lefevre et al., 2017). This is especially true for marginalized youth, such as youth who are in foster care, who have experienced a lack of reliability and consistency from adults in the past (Sapiro & Ward, 2020). In classroom or program settings, adults can create consistency by establishing norms that enable youth to predict what they can expect from adults on a day-to-day

basis (Griffith & Johnson, 2019). The remaining principles described in this literature review, consistently enacted over time, can lead to increased youth trust in adults (Griffith et al., 2018).

Trusted adults demonstrate personal interest and pursue connection (Above and beyond)

To build meaningful, trusted relationships, adults should be intentional in how they use their time with and proximity to youth by initiating communication and showing a personal interest in young people's lives (Deutsch et al., 2020). Youth build trust with adults who initiate contact and make effort to know them (Holland, 2015; Vaclavik et al., 2017). Adults taking the initiative to get to know young people may be especially important for youth who feel less connected to others in general (Futch Ehrlich et al., 2016).

Adults who are trusted by youth are often the ones who use their time or presence to go "above and beyond" (Deutsch et al., 2020). Young people can discern whether an adult has a genuine interest in their lives as opposed to when an adult is interacting with them out of obligation or simply because it's their job. For example, young people want teachers who do more than "just teach" (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014). Youth value adults who "really care" about them on a personal level and not just out of professional obligation (Futch Ehrlich et al., 2016; Lefevre et al., 2017; Vaclavik et al., 2017). In their model of teacher trust formation, Demerath et al. describe this as youth assessing an educator's motivation, asking, "Why are you really here?" (2022). Adults who check in on youth or support young people in a way that is "above and beyond" what other adults do or what youth perceive to be their role are more trusted (Rivens et al., 2022; Vaclavik et al., 2017). Adults may have to play a more nuanced role than that of their official job or role in order to go "above and beyond" and gain the trust of youth (Griffith & Johnson, 2019).

In addition to going "above and beyond" in the adult's official role, youth want adults to see them as more than their role as "program participant" or "student." For youth, trust grows when adults treat them as a whole person and as an individual, showing that they care for youth outside of the specific context of their relationship (Allen et al., 2016; Chhuon & Wallace, 2014; Griffith et al., 2018). Specifically, the literature described adults showing an interest in youth by communicating genuine enjoyment of them, being friendly, and learning young people's names (Demerath et al., 2022; Griffith & Johnson, 2019). Yu et al. describe this as "noticing" – youth feel valued when they are greeted, called by their names, or feel otherwise seen by adults (2018). Adults should use a tone of voice that communicates excitement, enjoyment, and interest (Demerath et al., 2022). A strategy for communicating interest in youths' lives outside of their role as "student" or "program participant" is discussing mutual interests and experiences or sharing a sense of humor (Futch Ehrlich et al., 2016) . These conversations may not be long or deep, but have meaning for youth and support the building of trusted relationships (Yu et al., 2018). For youth-adult relationships within program or school contexts, adults can pursue connection by finding opportunities to work with a student or participant one-on-one (Griffith & Johnson, 2019).

Principles of Creating Relational Safety

Trusted adults practice open communication and active listening (Don't sugarcoat it)

Trusted relationships between youth and adults are characterized by high-quality communication with mutual sharing of information on a wide range of topics, such as family, job, and academics (Duke et al., 2017). Honest, authentic communication helps build trust as youth are more likely to perceive these adults as being genuine (Best & Blakeslee, 2020; Lewing et al., 2018; Valenti et al., 2020). Young people appreciate adults who are direct and transparent in their communication and "don't sugarcoat it" (Best & Blakeslee, 2020; Griffith et al., 2018; Meltzer et al., 2018). This can include giving direct guidance, clear expectations, or honest feedback (Best & Blakeslee, 2020; Griffith et al., 2018; Holland, 2015). In leading with honest, direct communication, adults can model and thereby encourage honesty in youth (Valenti et al., 2020).

While young people report appreciation for direct communication, it should also be sensitive and non-judgmental to show that the adult is both honest and caring (Best & Blakeslee, 2020; Griffith et al., 2018). Youth also describe a preference for being "talked with" in a low-key way rather than "told" - which communicates respect (Meltzer et al., 2018).

Young people also appreciate adults who are good listeners, especially when they are going through challenges (Kaufman et al., 2024, 2024; Melton et al., 2021). Trust-building requires adults to demonstrate active listening, helping young people to feel heard (Lefevre et al., 2017; Valenti et al., 2020). This includes reflecting and acknowledging what a young person has said and allowing them to direct conversations rather than forcing the adult's agenda (Kaufman et al., 2024; Valenti et al., 2020). Active listening should be done to understand the young person's perspective and in a non-judgmental manner (Rivens et al., 2022). Listening in this way allows adults to be attuned to youths' needs (Griffith et al., 2018).

Communication styles that are unengaging can negatively impact trust-building. Youth describe adults who come across as grumpy, arrogant, uncomfortable, or closed off to communication as less engaging. For example, youth report reading facial expressions or interpreting a closed classroom door as an adult being closed off to communication. In addition, being dismissive or not listening to youths' experiences or feedback is disengaging (Buehler et al., 2020). When young people believe an adult "won't listen," this may discourage them from openly sharing (Rivens et al., 2022).

Trusted adults are non-judgmental and patient (Don't judge)

Young people build trust with adults who are patient and communicate that they do not judge them. By lacking judgment, an adult can show a young person that they are both valued as they are and capable of growth (Meltzer et al., 2018). Withholding judgment also communicates respect as it offers youth room to grow and learn from mistakes (Demerath et al., 2022). Lack of judgment can be especially important when young people disclose vulnerable or sensitive information to an adult (Lefevre et al., 2017). These moments of vulnerability can be critical in building trust, as a non-

judgmental, attuned response from the adult can be a catalyst for trust growth (Griffith et al., 2018). Specifically, being non-judgmental can include avoiding unnecessary criticism, which could be perceived as disrespectful and reinforce low expectations (Demerath et al., 2022).

Communicating without judgment can also allow young people to feel like they can be fully themselves (Wesley et al., 2020). Feeling unconditionally accepted and being able to be their authentic self can be particularly important to youth who have experienced previous judgment and rejection from adults, such as LGBTQIA+ young people (Kaufman et al., 2024; Schofield et al., 2019).

Lack of judgment can also take the form of patience, which communicates understanding and commitment to a young person (Brake, 2020; Demerath et al., 2022). For example, being patient with youth behavior or through disagreement can demonstrate understanding of the challenges young people are facing, preventing a rupture in the relationship, and enabling adults to provide youth with coping skills (Brake, 2020; Rivens et al., 2022).

Trusted adults create relationships with mutual respect, trust, and vulnerability (It's a two-way street)

Trusted relationships between youth and adults are a two-way street. Both the adult and young person must have trust and respect for the other. This mutuality and reciprocity support the building of a trusting relationship (Best & Blakeslee, 2020).

Throughout the literature, young people shared that they grow to trust adults who first communicate trust in them. One way that adults communicate that they trust youth is by being vulnerable with them (Deutsch et al., 2020). Adults who share information about their personal lives, particularly challenges or difficult experiences, indicate to youth that they trust them with this information (Demerath et al., 2022; Deutsch et al., 2020; Duke et al., 2017). Vulnerability also allows youth to relate to the adult, knowing that they too have struggled, or signals that the adult understands the youth's situation and that they can be a role model to them (Allen et al., 2016; Choaibi & Lomas, 2021; Murillo, 2017). One study highlighted how adults can show vulnerability in other ways. For example, playful icebreakers offer the opportunity for adults to be vulnerable because you have to "put yourself out there" to participate (Griffith & Johnson, 2019).

Another way that adults communicate trust is by giving them responsibility and the benefit of the doubt. For example, one school communicated trust in their students by giving them laptops, uniforms, and extra-curricular activities. When treated as responsible for school resources, students felt trusted (Rhoden, 2017). In another study, it was pointed out that trust is built when adults do not assume that youth have bad intentions or view them as stereotypes or "just like the others" (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014).

The concept of respect was also interwoven with trust in the literature. Adults who respect youth earn back respect and trust from young people. Specifically, trusted adults respect youths' needs, goals,

and autonomy (Griffith et al., 2018). They communicate respect by treating young people as equals and not as someone they are better than or hold power over (Meltzer et al., 2018; Vaclavik et al., 2017). They also communicate respect through other *Trusted Adult Principles* discussed in this review, such as holding high standards for youth, not judging them, communicating directly, sharing power, and respecting their privacy (Demerath et al., 2022; Griffith & Johnson, 2019). Notably, respectful communication is important to youth. Young people describe an appreciation for "same-level" conversations, where the adult is "talking with" not "talking down to" a young person (Meltzer et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2018).

Trusted adults are fair, set expectations, and maintain confidentiality (Have boundaries)

Building trusting relationships requires that adults treat youth with fairness. Within a group setting, young people observe and assess whether an adult is treating others fairly or equally in various situations (Griffith et al., 2018; Griffith & Johnson, 2019). Notably, this fairness needs to be consistent, enforcing the sense that the adult is reliable in their fairness (Griffith et al., 2018; Griffith & Johnson, 2019; Rhoden, 2017; Russell et al., 2016). For teachers specifically, fairness in grading and discipline is important in building trusting relationships (Conner et al., 2023).

Unfair treatment was most frequently discussed regarding racial bias in school settings. Young people describe losing trust in adults who treat them unfairly because of their race or when they are in environments where discipline is racially biased (Demerath et al., 2022; Yeager et al., 2017). In school settings, specific teacher actions that youth report are unfair or racially biased include being singled out, favoritism, feeling belittled, and unwarranted or overly harsh punishment (Griffith et al., 2022).

Trusted environments are created when adults set expectations, norms, and define roles. Creating boundaries, expectations, and structure is important to creating a sense of professionalism for adults providing more formal services for youth (Valenti et al., 2020). For teachers, setting up classroom norms and expectations from the beginning can support trust-building. Specifically, activities that support relationship-building or that establish academic and behavioral expectations, rather than content engagement, in the first weeks of school, can help students create norms that support trust in the classroom (Brake, 2020). One strategy for establishing expectations in the classroom is creating a classroom contract at the beginning of the year (Brake, 2020).

Finally, trusted adults are confidential, meaning that youth can trust them to keep information private (Frederick et al., 2023). This is important not only for adults in formal roles, such as counselor or social worker, where there are confidentiality standards, but also in relationships without confidentiality guidelines, such as coaches or family friends (Lefevre et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2019). For teachers, this goes beyond just the privacy of academic data, but also of private life details that students may share (Best & Blakeslee, 2020; Conner et al., 2023; Murillo, 2017).

Trusted adults understand and believe lived experience (Believe me)

Youth want adults to understand and believe the challenges and realities of their experience (Sapiro & Ward, 2020). Demerath et al. refer to this ability as "compassionate perspective taking" (Demerath et al., 2022). Youth trust adults who make them feel understood by having deeper conversations, listening, and validating experiences different from their own (Kaufman et al., 2024; Melton et al., 2021; Parra López et al., 2024). It is important for adults to take time to understand what has happened to a young person, take their perspective and experience seriously, and pay attention to their particular needs within a situation (Rivens et al., 2022; Schofield et al., 2019; Valenti et al., 2020) . Importantly, young people need to feel believed when they share their experience (Lefevre et al., 2017; Lewing et al., 2018). Adults can demonstrate they hear and understand youth by taking action to support them (Brake, 2020; Demerath et al., 2022). For professionals in formal relationships with youth, this includes communicating an understanding of their situation and experience and that the professional has the skills and competence to treat or provide care for the young person (Lefevre et al., 2017; Moore et al., 2018). For teachers, giving students multiple opportunities to make mistakes and demonstrating patience can signal that they understand student challenges (Brake, 2020).

Young people tend to more readily connect with adults who share characteristics or experiences with them, such as race, socioeconomic status, upbringing, or immigrant status, as these adults have a direct understanding of their experience (Campos-Castillo et al., 2021; Murillo, 2017; Sapiro & Ward, 2020). The skill of adults communicating this shared experience with young people was referred to in one study as "establishing credibility" (Demerath et al., 2022). For teachers specifically, looking like or sharing lived experience with students means they can better understand their concerns and academic experiences (Parra López et al., 2024). While an adult who shares a lived experience can certainly create a starting place of trust, these adults also need to employ the other skill sets noted in the literature to build this trust (Schofield et al., 2019).

For adults who do not share key traits or experiences with young people, it is important for them to be aware of this difference and communicate that they understand themselves and how their reality is different from youth. Trusted adults discuss their positionality to youth – communicating that they understand who they are in relation to them and specifically identifying that they are self-aware of their race (Demerath et al., 2022). One study found that teachers' level of critical race consciousness, including their understanding of their personal biases, impacts the quality of relationship they were able to have with Black, Indigenous, and Youth of Color (Parra López et al., 2024). Adults can also gain trust by being aware of how systems and structures unfairly impact youth of color or youth from low-income homes and adapting their approaches to better serve them (Holland, 2015).

Principles of Supporting and Empowering Youth

Trusted adults provide warm, caring emotional support (Are you okay?)

One of the most prevalent themes throughout the literature was that trust is built through emotionally supportive relationships. Youth trust adults who are emotionally available and who they perceive to have the ability to provide emotional support (Best & Blakeslee, 2020; Campos-Castillo et al., 2021; Demerath et al., 2022; Pringle et al., 2019).

Under this theme, trusted adults were most often described as "warm" (Futch Ehrlich et al., 2016; Lefevre et al., 2017; Lewing et al., 2018; Pringle et al., 2019; Valenti et al., 2020). Other words to describe adults perceived as caring were empathetic, nurturing, sensitive, supportive, understanding, encouraging, approachable, motivating, kind, calm, gentle, and friendly (Duke et al., 2017; Futch Ehrlich et al., 2016; Lefevre et al., 2017; Lewing et al., 2018; Meltzer et al., 2018; Pringle et al., 2019; Rivens et al., 2022; Valenti et al., 2020).

Warm, caring relationships in which adults offer youth emotional support require adults to be attuned to young people's emotional needs and invest emotional labor in youth (Demerath et al., 2022; Valenti et al., 2020). In one study, youth described trust as growing when an adult responded to an emotional need by noticing, listening, comforting, or helping. Notably, youth want adults to be attentive and responsive to their needs with respect, within their boundaries, and without compromising their autonomy, which can mean listening without trying to solve the problem (Griffith et al., 2018; Russell et al., 2016).

Trusted adults create a relationship where youth feel safe to talk about their feelings (Choaibi & Lomas, 2021). This can be done by expressing care through words and actions (Russell et al., 2016). For example, adults can be attuned to youth and ask, "Are you okay?" or "Is anything going on?" as well as listen and communicate understanding (Melton et al., 2021). Being available and checking in on young people is an action that is associated with a warm, caring relationship (Moore et al., 2018). It should be noted that these nurturing relationships should be consistent. For example, in general, parental care builds trust, but inconsistent parental care weakens youth trust (McElroy-Heltzel et al., 2019).

Trusted adults share power and use authority to help (On their level)

Trusted adults should share power with youth when possible and use their authority to protect and help young people when appropriate. Trust is built and power is shared when adults reduce relational hierarchy, use youth-driven approaches, and support youth autonomy in context-appropriate ways. Reducing the hierarchical relationship between young people and adults can support trust-building (Griffith & Johnson, 2019). Youth appreciate relationships that feel more like peers than a hierarchy, in which the young person is an equal contributor (Melton et al., 2021). Adults can create these more equitable relationships by speaking to and treating a young person "like an adult" or being "on their level"(Deutsch et al., 2020; Griffith & Johnson, 2019; Meltzer et al., 2018).

Youth-driven approaches are more likely to build trust than adult-driven approaches (Buehler et al., 2020). Buehler et al. describe adult-driven approaches as those that operate on an adult's schedule, lack youth input, and don't prioritize getting to know youth as individuals (2020). Youth-driven approaches would then operate on youths' schedules, include youth input, and offer opportunities to get to know young people as individuals.

In school settings, young people appreciate "autonomy-supportive" teachers who challenge them in their learning but also offer sufficient support (Yu et al., 2018). Teachers report that providing students with choice and responsibility in the classroom promotes a sense of autonomy and builds trust (Russell et al., 2016).

In professional settings such as social work or foster care, adults can create a "strong working alliance" with young people by involving them in setting goals and tasks (Valenti et al., 2020). Professionals are more likely to gain the trust of young people if they use a youth-led approach and by involving youth in decision-making whenever possible (Best & Blakeslee, 2020; Lewing et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2018). In some cases, especially professional relationships, autonomy may need to be taken away from young people for their own protection. However, professionals can maintain trust by explaining their actions (Lefevre et al., 2017).

 Adults often have more power to help than young people. It's important for youth to see adults using the authority they hold to support, protect, or advocate for young people (Best & Blakeslee, 2020; Deutsch et al., 2020). Young people may be more willing to seek help from adults who are viewed as having authority and using it appropriately (Campos-Castillo et al., 2021). This could include protecting young people from physical harm, or advocating against racial discrimination or inequality (Moore et al., 2018; Parra López et al., 2024). It could also include advocating for youth by mediating conflicts (Rivens et al., 2022).

Importantly, adults should refrain from using their power to enforce their own agenda. This could be overstepping or forcing a young person to discuss their personal life at school, or shaming and belittling a student in front of others (Conner et al., 2023). Young people prefer to share voluntarily rather than be "forced" to share (Meltzer et al., 2018).

Trusted adults have high expectations and offer practical support (Believe in me)

Trusted adults have high standards for young people, but also communicate that they believe they can meet those standards and provide meaningful support along the way. As previously discussed, giving young people responsibility and autonomy helps them feel respected, trusted, and believed in (Deutsch et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2018). Youth appreciate adults who challenge them and push them to grow (Melton et al., 2021). Importantly, having high expectations for young people communicates that adults understand their potential. Trusted adults communicate to youth that they are confident in their abilities and believe in them. This encouragement, affirmation, and trust is meaningful to youth and can in turn foster trust of the adult (Griffith et al., 2018). Conversely, trust can erode in relationships

where youth perceive adults as having low expectations for them, for example, not encouraging them to attend a four-year college (Holland, 2015).

High expectations without the support and encouragement needed to achieve them can be discouraging for youth and erode trust (Holland, 2015). In one study, youth reported frustration with adults who appeared to want them to succeed, but then failed to provide adequate instruction, resources, or time, disregarded youths' abilities, or failed to model the behavior themselves (Buehler et al., 2020). Support can include advice, help, financial support, or assistance accessing housing, work, or transportation (Campos-Castillo et al., 2021; Duke et al., 2017; Griffith et al., 2018). Giving support or advice, especially in times of vulnerability, demonstrates care, which builds trust. Additionally, when good advice pays off, the young person can see that the adult can be trusted (Griffith et al., 2018).

In school settings, youth want academic support and to know that their teachers are truly invested in helping them learn and gain the critical skills they need to succeed. Interestingly, in one study, students shared frustration that teachers seemed more interested in getting students to like them than helping students to learn (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014). In schools, giving students responsibility and communicating belief in their potential could take the form of assigning students bigger projects (Yu et al., 2018). Teacher support of youth could include spending time with them after school or offering second chances, demonstrating that they care and are invested in their success (Allen et al., 2016).

Identity Considerations and Strategies

This review aimed to include literature on trusted relationships between adults and young people who are from low-income homes, identify as BIPOC, or identify as LGBTQIA+. Though discussed throughout the above *Trusted Adult Principles*, it is important to highlight considerations and strategies when building trusted relationships between youth and adults of various identities. Notably, there was limited literature on building trusted relationships specifically with youth from low-income contexts or who identify as LGBTQIA+.

For some young people, the age, gender, or upbringing of an adult can be a barrier to building trusted relationships. Youth might be less trusting of an older adult who is perceived to understand them less, might prefer talking to someone of the same gender as them, or might seek out someone who has a similar upbringing (Campos-Castillo et al., 2021; Deutsch et al., 2020). For example, children of immigrants may view their parents' life experiences as very different from theirs and feel that their parent does not understand what they are going through (Campos-Castillo et al., 2021). As previously discussed, an adult's awareness and communication about these differences in identity or experience can support the building of trust (Demerath et al., 2022; Parra López et al., 2024). Conversely, adults who share identity or experience with young people can use their identity as a point of connection (Parra López et al., 2024).

The most common youth identity discussed in the literature was race and ethnicity. As previously noted, unfair treatment or discrimination based on race erodes trust (Demerath et al., 2022; Griffith et al., 2022). When an adult is perceived to treat a young person unfairly due to race, this can reduce trust not only in that adult but also in adults generally, or in institutions, such as schools (Griffith et al., 2022; Yeager et al., 2017). When racial discipline disparities exist in schools, this impacts levels of trust for youth of color more than others, but impacts all students' trust in the school (Anyon et al., 2016).

There were several strategies in the literature specific to building trusted relationships with youth of color. Youth development programs for youth with specific identities, with mentors that they can relate to, can create an environment for trust-building (Harris & Kiyama, 2015). In school settings, the use of Wise Feedback and Warm Demanding has been shown to repair or build trust with students, particularly African American or Black students (Yeager et al., 2014; Watson et al., 2016). These strategies are discussed further in the following section. More generally, adults should examine their own biases and move away from viewing young people through a deficit lens (Watson et al., 2016). Additionally, adults can identify areas where systems aren't set up to support racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic minorities and adapt their strategies to meet their specific needs (Holland, 2015).

School Context Considerations and Interventions

Most of the literature that discusses how environments can support the building of trust is focused on school environments. Trust within school contexts is interconnected, with staff, parent, and administrator trust in each other impacting student trust. Student trust in teachers and schools may be higher in environments where teachers trust other school staff, parents trust the school and teachers, and teachers trust the students (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). As previously noted, racial discipline disparities erode trust in a school context, impacting the trust of all students, but especially students of color (Anyon et al., 2016; Yeager et al., 2017). Some literature discussed how school-based relationships can be a barrier for youth because they feel that they cannot discuss certain topics related to their out-of-school life (Deutsch et al., 2020).

The literature provides some examples of how schools can create environments that support trust building. At the class level, teachers can create safe classrooms by practicing open and honest communication, including messaging around inclusivity, allowing students to ask for help, and protecting students from harm (Conner et al., 2023). At the school level, creating a culture of high expectations for students can facilitate trust. This includes how all school staff talk about students, communicate belief in students' abilities, and the explicit and implicit messaging students get about their potential (Demerath et al., 2022; Yeager et al., 2014).

Specific approaches or interventions discussed in the literature include Wise Feedback or Warm Demanding and one-on-one conferences. The most common strategy for teachers discussed in the literature was Wise Feedback, or the similar approach of Warm Demanding. These strategies are

characterized by the ability to hold high standards for a student and maintain a warm care for their well-being. These approaches are particularly impactful in supporting and building trust with youth of color, as treating young people in this way can communicate that they are not seen as a "stereotype" and have the ability to achieve the high standard of the adult (Yeager et al., 2014, 2017). Yeager et al. describe this as providing critical feedback to student work while also, "communicating high standards and a personal assurance of the student's potential to reach them" (2014). This can also apply to mentoring relationships, where Warm Demanding can take the form of asking students to change behavior or ways of interacting with others (Watson et al., 2016).

Another tool for building trust with students is individual conferencing. Frequent and effective one-on-one classroom conferencing between teachers and students allows for continuous communication and trust building. This strategy communicates to students that the teacher cares for them on an individual level and is available to support their success and well-being. In one study, teachers used one-on-one conferencing to review student work and provide feedback (Brake, 2020). In another, hallway conferences were discussed as an alternative to disciplinary action. In this example, hallway conferences could be requested by students or teachers when students are unable to focus or learn because something was bothering them. This allows students to calm down in the hallway and talk with the teacher or administrator of their choice about what is bothering them (Parra López et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This review provides an overview of the principles, or ways of being, that adults can enact to build trusting relationships with young people: being consistently present, demonstrating personal interest and pursuing connection, practicing open communication and active listening, being non-judgmental and patient, creating relationships with mutual respect, trust, and vulnerability, being fair, setting expectations, and maintaining confidentiality, understanding and believing lived experience, providing warm, caring emotional support, sharing power and using authority to help, and having high expectations and offering practical support. It also highlights how adult and youth identities can impact the building of trusted relationships and provides strategies for trust-building in school settings.

Notably, there was limited literature specific to youth from low-income homes or who identify as LGBQTIA+. Specific strategies and interventions for adults in non-school settings, particularly familial adults, were also lacking in the literature.

This review is not intended to be exhaustive or systematic in nature. Rather, as part of a broader Needs Assessment, this review will support the creation of the *TrustEd* training curriculum and provide practical direction in training adults to build trusted relationships with youth.

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