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SPEAKERS

Andrea Prejean, Dr. Debbie Pushor



Dr. Debbie Pushor 00:00

So often, I think schools think they are the main game. We are the big deal, and parents need to do what we ask them to support us. I'm trying to turn that on its head and say families educate their children from birth to forever. They're their children's lifelong educators. We, as educators have the privilege of walking alongside them.

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Andrea Prejean 00:34

Welcome to the Parent Teacher Home Visits podcast, where we explore the power of connection between families and schools. I'm Andrea Prejan, Executive Director of Parent Teacher Home Visits, and I'm so glad you're here. In each episode, we talk with educators, families, researchers, and community leaders about what happens when trust becomes the foundation for teaching and learning. We'll share real stories, practical ideas, and the powerful impact of relationships, one home visit at a time. Today, I have the deep honor of speaking with Dr. Debbie Pushar, Professor Emerita in the Department of Curriculum Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. And Debbie, I'm so hoping I said Saskatchewan correctly. Did I get that? I practice. Debbie is a mother of three, a former classroom teacher, principal, and central administrator, and a researcher whose work has centered on one powerful question: What changes when educators recognize parents as holders of essential knowledge? Her scholarship builds on Saskatchewan's long history of community education and Indigenous education, and she has helped shape how the province thinks about welcoming families into the educational process. Contracted by the Ministry of Education, Debbie authored the Share Framework, Saskatchewan's first provincial family engagement framework. She has also recently completed a new book with a group of practicing teachers, "Fires of Change: Enhancing Teaching and Learning Through Systemic Parent Engagement. The book is organized month by month, walking educators through a full year of relational practice. And Debbie is also a cherished member of the parent-teacher home visit family. She visited our Sacramento office in 2018, trained alongside our team, and helped bring the PTHV model to five pilot school divisions in Saskatchewan. Local research there confirmed what we've seen across our network: relational home visits shift mindsets, deepen trust, and strengthen outcomes. Debbie, welcome.

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Dr. Debbie Pushor 02:42

Ah, thank you so much, Andrea. It's wonderful to be here with you.

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Andrea Prejean 02:45

So you were invited by Saskatchewan's Minister of Education to serve on the Provincial Education Committee. Don't you love federal and government agencies when they put together a title for a committee? It shaped the plan for the province's next decade of education. Tell us about that moment and what you noticed. And for our American listeners, I just want to be the minister of education. In this case, is equivalent to like our state secretary of education or a state commissioner of education, right?

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Dr. Debbie Pushor 03:18

Yeah, that's correct.

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Andrea Prejean 03:19

Okay, all right. Yeah. So tell us what you noticed while you were in that room.

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Dr. Debbie Pushor 03:24

Thanks so much, Andrea. It started with my phone ringing one day, and the Minister of Education was on the line, and he said to me, "I've recently learned about your work with parent and family engagement, and I'm really curious about it. And so we ended up having a really long, in-depth conversation as we talked about what family engagement is, what it isn't, what it could look like in the province of Saskatchewan, what the research was telling us about the power of family engagement. He just asked so many questions and was such a good listener. It really was a great conversation. So I thought I had a really good chance to tell him what it meant for kids and families in Saskatchewan. After our conversation, then he asked me to join that provincial education council that you just mentioned, and it included stakeholders representative of all facets of the education sector in Saskatchewan, we were appointed through order and council, a government process, to serve on that council, and so I was there with other individuals from the pre-kindergarten to grade 12 sector, with French and Indigenous Education Authority representatives, higher education, business, employer, industry. So we really were trying to capture voices across across the province. I was there as a representative of the University of Saskatchewan, and particularly asked to share my research on how to bring families into schools as a kind of a key focus of what I was contributing. So to get to the specific question you asked, you said what happened when I was in the room. It was really quite a surprise to me, Andrea. Actually, because when I spoke about family engagement, I saw these blank looks on people's faces. So as you know, if I talked about literacy, it's easy to imagine people picture children and books and families reading and all kinds of things come to mind. That wasn't happening when I said family engagement, and so that's when I left some of those meetings thinking, how do I make this real? I have a sense in my body what this is and what it looks like. How do I help others do that? And because I'd had my wonderful visit with you with PTHV in Sacramento, I've been following you on social media for a long time. I thought, you know, I love the idea of home visits. They're tangible. They're concrete. You can see them. It would give people a real sense of one aspect of what family engagement could look like. So I contacted Dr. Ted Ament, who works with our Saskatchewan School Boards Association. He had been my student both as a master student and a doctoral student. I knew he knew this work on family engagement well. So we talked and said, "What could we imagine? And we decided to apply for funding. It was the Saskatchewan School Boards Association applied for funding through what's called an innovation fund with our Ministry of Education, and that gave us the dollars for our first year to engage the five pilot school districts that that we mentioned, and we chose five because we wanted an urban school board. We wanted rural. We wanted northern. We have people far in our north that are quite isolated. We wanted Catholic because Catholic education is part of our public ed system, and and those folks who were remote. So we established Ted and I put together an advisory council. We hired a researcher, and that's how the whole thing began in our work with all of you.

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Andrea Prejean 07:09

You know, so much of what you said is intriguing, and what we know is that this works in all different kinds of neighborhoods and all different kinds, and so it's really exciting to hear that you all were so thoughtful and deliberate about making sure that you touched all of the kids and all of the contexts in your province. I'm always intrigued, and what sort of excites me a lot about your work is the research because it's so local. Sometimes research seems out of grass, out of contact, not exactly what I need. That doesn't sound like my school district. What does it really say to me? Sort of all of those things. Even as a teacher, when you're reading research, you know, trying to think about how it would support teaching and learning. But your research was local, and so why did that matter? And what did you find?

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Dr. Debbie Pushor 08:00

Such a good point, and and educators often will say yes, but that was a study done in the United States. We're not like the United States. We hear that a lot, and as I mentioned, you know, in choosing the representative school boards, we have a large indigenous and Métis population in our province. We have Hutterite colonies. We have francophone communities as well as our anglophone communities. We have Catholic and public schools as part of the public system. There's so many things going on, and so to be representative of that became really important. As a result of that, local data is really highly valued, and what our two years of implementation of the parent-teacher home visit program in Saskatchewan produced was local evidence that confirmed, as you said, Andrea, exactly what you know from your research in the United States. What was good is we had teachers then saying to colleagues, to parents, you know, word in our province was how much the training had shifted their perceptions of families. Sometimes they're afraid of families. Sometimes they're judging families. Sometimes there's a distance. And what it did is, it brought this excitement about working with families, and so all of a sudden, then we had that homegrown evidence that was really important to other initiatives that we're doing and informed actions in a lot of places in our province. So we have a report from our year one of the project. We have a report from year two, and those remain powerful documents for us as we move forward with our provincial education plan, as we move forward with other kinds of activities in our province as well.

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Andrea Prejean 09:50

So you know we see sort of the same some of the same dynamics in the U.S. We know that district leaders respond a little more readily to. Evidence from their nearby districts, and and that makes a lot of sense. I saw a lot of that in my early community schools work when we were trying to convince a principal or superintendent to sort of think about it. We would often just even connect them to have a conversation with another superintendent, like you know they're in they're in my space, they understand my issues. You know you are really building a province-wide vision with the Share framework, and it's the only province right in Canada that has a dedicated family engagement framework. So, talk to us a little bit about what that Share framework is and why it maybe changes the conversation for school leaders.

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Dr. Debbie Pushor 10:43

That's a great question, and it was a long time coming. Being able to sit on the provincial education council and have a voice about the importance of family engagement enabled that first body to build family engagement into all aspects of the plan. It has four pillars, and it that plan set out commitments that we wanted to be honored in our province with the next 10-year education plan. It it named focus elements, relationships with families, welcoming and hospitality in schools, things like that became a conversation. Once the provincial education council did their work, those visionary statements that that sense of what we want for our province was handed to a second team called a provincial education plan implementation team. They call themselves PEPIT for short. Like you said, Andrea, lots of lingo here, right? And so the Pepet team was practitioners. It was directors of education, superintendents, consultants, people who work right in the schools and the school divisions. So their task then was to take what we imagined and translate it into an action plan. Within that, they established teams to do the different aspects of the planning. They call them milestone teams. Family engagement fell into milestone one, and they got together to plan. Okay, what are we going to make happen with family engagement that's practical? And they decided they wanted three things to happen: the development of a family engagement framework for the province, a family engagement playbook to follow that, and then finally in servicing the development of in servicing that could be offered in regions around the province, so that people knew from the framework what it is and why it's important, knew from the playbook how to do it, some ideas of how, and then finally the in servicing, the development of skills, and the shifts in attitudes and beliefs, and so on. So what milestone one did then was post a request for proposals. They wanted someone to write the family engagement framework, and through that competitive process, I was selected to develop the framework. So for me, later in my career, it was really an exciting task to be given. Kind of a culmination of all the research and work I'd been doing for probably 25 years. There had been three public consultations done in the province prior to this process starting. What's your vision for education? And it asked all the public. It asked parents and stakeholders what they wanted for the education system. So when I began planning the framework, I looked to what the voices of Saskatchewan had to say, and then I went to look at frameworks all around the United States, where most of them exist, and also globally. So drawing on work like Karen Mapp's dual capacity framework, and Henderson wrote the framework for Connecticut. I found the Massachusetts framework really helpful. Nevada's there were so many, and I looked to the great work Scotland was doing as well. I took all of that, my own research, other people's research, and I worked to contextualize that for our specific province of Saskatchewan, and then with the framework articulating what is family engagement, what's our common definition going to be, so that we're all working towards it in the same way, and and why is it important? So that's really what the framework does. So it it really gives an arc of possibility from before children enter school through the early years, elementary, secondary, into postsecondary or trades or into work and life. So I think what's important about what the framework does is it provides an accountability structure, and I think it gives permission to spend the time and the resources with staff to really grow a family engagement plan. So the playbook then is going to give the how, but but I think we have the accountability, as I said, structure. In place right at the moment, which is a first for us and a really important first.

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Andrea Prejean 15:05

So I think you mentioned an implementation action team and the how, and I don't know how many frameworks, standards, books I had on my shelf when I was teaching, but a lot, and often it doesn't get to the implementation piece or the how piece, and we know that classroom teachers have so little time to actually sit and think about these things, especially during the school day. We're talking about after school; they they might. But I think it's such a great plan that you all were thinking about this, and I love the idea of this sort of arc of possibilities. Yeah, it's just such a lovely way to describe it. For our listeners who are superintendents or state education leaders in the U.S. what would you want them to know about the process of building something like this? Were there moments that tested your resolve, changed your approach. What's your best advice for for our leaders who are doing the best they can in often very difficult situations?

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Dr. Debbie Pushor 16:10

This process definitely requires persistence. I think we all know that when we're trying to make a change, it doesn't come quickly or easily. I've been consciously working toward a systematic approach for probably 10 years or more. So even though the research shows so strongly the benefits for children, students, for parents and families, for educators, it just hasn't kind of taken hold within our systems. And so I think there's two really important elements to that we've we've touched on them already: accountability and sustainability, and both of those things came strongly out of the research that we did with our home visits research project. So what's exciting about this work is that it's being built into our provincial plan. So now it's no longer if you get the time, if you feel like it, if it's a passion for you. It's now a part of the education plan for everyone in our entire province. So it provides incentive, I think, for leadership development. I always think that our principals, our superintendents, can't lead what they don't know, so it kind of is incentive to study family engagement, to gain knowledge, to look at the research and the literature. I think it also is an incentive for resource allocation. This isn't an extra. This isn't an add-on or a frill. This is essential work of a division, and I think it also is incentive for training for educators and for parents and families as well. We know that contact enables us to overcome fears and assumptions, and it gives a concrete pathway to possibilities. So having it built into the plan for me is really a huge step. It moves it from being a one-off here or there to being the work of all of us across the province. So, if I was speaking to your U.S. leaders, I think I'd really encourage them to have concrete and touchable practices like home visits, so that that concept of family engagement isn't abstract, but becomes visual and visible, and it's a change from speaking policy to begin to speak practice pedagogy philosophy, and so that roadmap, having that roadmap toward implementation, I think is a really important piece.

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Andrea Prejean 18:40

So I keep circling back to those two words of accountability and sustainability, and we know in the U.S. family engagement is often a policy, but as I said, implementation is still too often left to what we might call individual champions. I have heard it talked about as islands of excellence, but you know you have a committed principal, a family liaison, a teacher leader, a superintendent who really believes in the work. Those champions matter deeply. They're out there, you know, beating the bushes, doing the most they can. But if the work only lives with them, it's really fragile. And you know that superintendent leaves, or that principal leaves, or that union leader leaves, and whatever the program was kind of falls apart. So, what feels so significant about Saskatchewan's approach is that the family engage engagement is being treated as an infrastructure, and it's embedded into the plan and has this milestone actions. You talked about the playbook. It includes training, and that really sends, at least for me, a really different message about the work. That it is not an add-on, but it is the work itself. And so, really appreciate what you were talking about, sort of the congre. Practices, and for our U.S. listeners, I think the takeaway is that we don't really have to wait for a perfect national strategy. But districts, states, unions, community partners-they can build that infrastructure. They can talk about shared language, and we have a lot to learn from a model that Debbie is talking about. That's already out there that already has data to it, and that we can learn a lot from our our Canadian brothers and sisters. So you've spent more than 20 years teaching courses in family engagement at the undergraduate and graduate level. I have a particular love for pre-service teachers, and I know that they're important as well in your work. Traditionally, our pre-service in states is is short. If you really think about it, it could be as little as three semesters, and then a semester teaching, and then you're out. And so, one of the things I hear from, and just having conversations with college faculty, is that there's so much to do. We just really don't have time. I know it's important, but I don't know where to put it. And did you find your way around that? And how did you do it?

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Dr. Debbie Pushor 21:08

Yes, we did. Unfortunately, coursework on family engagement is a requirement for teacher certification. I would love to see that. I'm still working on that piece, influencing that piece. But what happened is we had I consider it a really great opportunity arose at our university. In our education faculty, we were offering an elementary stream program in the Bachelor of Education, two years, four semesters, like you said, and we were offering a secondary stream for those people who wanted to teach middle years and and high school students. We worked hard to get an early years stream built into our program as well for teachers who were working with our youngest children. And when the opportunity to develop that early years stream came, we jumped on that. And as we developed the new courses, both the required courses and elective courses, we established family engagement as an outcome for all of our courses. So it was written in alongside the math, alongside the literacy, alongside the social studies, and we said that understanding of the knowledge parents and families bring to our teaching, the cultural and contextual information they have needed to be considered as we learned about our curriculum. So, to to give an example for one of our courses, in our first literacy course, we ask the students to connect with a family, to go into their home and spend time with them, and talk with the family about how literacy unfolds in their environment in natural ways to observe and to watch. They then put a kind of a photo voice project together that honors the literacy that's happening, and then they begin to look at as educators, knowing that this literacy is already happening, and this is what children are bringing to school. How do we build on that as a teacher? So how do I honor the literacy the child has, and then extend it in my classroom? So right from their very first class in their very first semester, they're in parents' homes. They're working with families. They're talking about parent knowledge, and they're working to plan their program around that parent knowledge. So I think that's really important because often what we hear is our new teachers are afraid of families. They're afraid of being judged. They're afraid of being seen as less able. They're afraid to make a mistake in front of our families. So when they work together all through their program, they see families as an asset, as allies. They see families as a source of knowledge, and so they finish their program already believing that they're going to work with families and that families have something to bring to them. So we don't do a formal home visit in the sense of the PTHV relational home visit model, but we have them in the homes right away. You mentioned the book *Fires of Change* that we're writing as well. It's it's going to be released very shortly, and and they're working with a group of practicing teachers. We wrote the book as a month-to-month book. So often we'll show teachers, for example, how to do a meet the family night in September instead of a meet the teacher night. But then they say, okay, that's great, but now I don't know what to do. So what we wanted to do is show them here are some things you can do in August as you prepare. Here are some things you can do in September. What a perfect time to do your relational home visits, and October and November. So we're really trying to help them see that arc of possibility again through the entire year.

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Andrea Prejean 25:00

I'm looking forward to reading that book and recommending it because I think that that is something we see with teachers. They do do a home visit and then things go well and that's great. But we know that a relationship isn't built on one activity. It's something that you know you got to work on, and I think it's just an amazing idea of giving teachers those ideas of what does it look like month after month after month. So it's it's concrete for them. So I was a teacher educator for a very short time, and you bring to whatever situation you have you're in your experiences, and you know my experiences as a pre-service teacher. I did not get a lot of education in how to engage families, and then I became a teacher educator. And I'm looking back on you know what I did, hoping I did a good job, and knowing that I was teaching math ed to new pre-service teachers and the NCTM National Council teaches mathematics does have a standard around family engagement. I know I did integrate that, but my own experiences were pretty limited, and I don't think that that's unusual with teacher educators today. So, how are you thinking about that as someone who's worked at the university and worked with pre-service and had colleagues, I'm sure that you know same place as I. I want to do good work. How are you thinking about that with your colleagues?

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Dr. Debbie Pushor 26:31

It's such an important piece, and as I said earlier, you can't teach what you don't know, or you don't teach what you don't believe in, or have lived. And so, ensuring that teachers in the field, that instructors in our colleges and universities get that experience becomes really important. And that's why I'm so excited that the provincial education plan has family engagement built in all the way through. So now it becomes a learning opportunity, and as I said, an accountability to develop your skills, to develop your knowledge, to gain expertise in that area. With our early years program, sometimes what we did is we hired back as sessional teachers who had been through the parent engagement classes at the university were already demonstrating strong family engagement practices, and then they became instructors because they had the knowledge. It was about 2010. I had the opportunity to begin to develop master's courses. We know we have a small number of new teachers entering the field every year, and we have a large body of experienced teachers who, like you said, Andrea, don't have any background in family engagement. And so, the intention of the master's program was to develop very specific courses on family engagement in order to give them that opportunity to move into practices that hadn't been a part of their repertoire before. So, in the three courses, we really looked at our beliefs and assumptions about families. We spent time looking at the practice of home visits. We looked at all kinds of possible ways of engaging parents in teaching and learning, whether it be on the landscape of the school or outside of it. When I designed those courses, I made them experiential because I really believe that I didn't want them being at the university learning about families. I wanted them to be in the community, in homes, learning with and from families as well. So we created these experiential courses where they did a lot of things in homes, in schools, going into neighborhoods, doing community walks, projects like cooking for cohesion, where we learned about family stories through food, that kind of thing. To make that really meaningful for the graduate students, I wanted them to have that opportunity to apply what they knew, to take that knowledge out into the public, and to influence the learning of other people as well. So, seven cohorts of students moved through that time frame. Three of them have written books. Two of them have planned and facilitated large conferences, one cohort planned a video series, and it's available on my website. And then another a podcast series, which is also available, and so the impact of that in enhancing their practices, talking about their practices, sharing them with others, writing about them, etc. has really given us a large body of educators in our province who have expertise and can provide leadership.

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Andrea Prejean 29:52

You know, your work gives us a powerful answer. Future educators need more than theory; they need real experience. As you've talked about, to really help them understand that families are the holders of that knowledge, that wisdom, and that partnership. And I always think about it when I work with pre-service teachers to talk to them about you going into teaching to do something that you're excited about. You want to work with students, and you want to help them learn and be excited about all of the things that you were excited about, and connecting with families is actually giving you that space to do the thing that you came to the classroom to do. So really excited about that. I'll also invite our audience to listen if they haven't to a podcast we did last year with Jenna Porter, who is at Sacramento State, and Tim Finkley, who works with Kate, that does accreditation for education across the U.S. at universities and colleges, and we talk to them about how moving family engagement into teacher prep can become more than an add-on, but can become essential. So you can, everybody out there, you can get that link on our website. We talked a little bit about lessons U.S. education leaders can draw from your work in Canada, but let's bring the idea of home visits to teachers. Talk a little bit about that. Any time we talk about bringing a new practice, very real concerns get raised, especially around time, and we do cover this pretty extensively in our training. What did you learn about bringing in a practice of this kind to teachers in Canada, and what were their frequently asked questions?

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Dr. Debbie Pushor 31:28

Thanks for that, Andrea. So true, and it's really important to look at what some of those complexities are. So often, what teachers are facing here, probably very similar to the United States, is growing class sizes, increased complexity with the needs of students, and limited educational funding. Those are all things I hear teachers talk about, our teachers' union talk about. And so, what happens then is when we begin to introduce conversations around family engagement or family engagement practices like home visits, what people will say is it's workload intensification. That's more work for us. So what we're really needing to do, I think, as we introduce home visits and other family engagement practices, is to shift the conversation to a benefits lens rather than a workload lens. The fact that the home visits as relationship building is what we learned from you and what we used in our pilot—that's such an important piece, because as soon as teachers engaged in that way with families, they became really excited about the work. They started to talk about all that they gained and how it was making their planning in the classroom, their relationship building with children easier. They talked about now that I know this family and I understand what's happening so much better. We're not having conflicts the way we had been, or if something arises that's challenging, we have a relationship to sit down and say, "Hey, what are we going to do about this? So initially, it started as a workload conversation, and it shifted so much. It became a conversation of how much they were gaining, how much they were benefiting, how much it was easing their workload, not making it more complex. And so they saw that knowledge they were gaining from families as really enhancing all the aspects of what they were doing at school. And then, as we went into year two, we really began to say, "So, where can you get the time for this? And teachers are creative people, and they were looking at their schedules and things they were spending time with, and starting to talk about where could home visits sit, perhaps instead of something else, or how they might they use unassigned time in new ways. So we were talking with principals and educational leaders about what if you have one less staff meeting a month or during a period, and every teacher now has that time to do a home visit. Instead, what if in your non-instructional days, as you're planning for the school year, everyone does a home visit? What if on a PD day it becomes a day or part of a day to do home visit? So the creativity started to happen, saying within the resources and structures we have, there are ways to make this happen without it always being a workload intensification. So that became really important, and I think for our province, the local research, the teacher stories, talking about the impact and the ways in which it was helping them really works to reduce resistance on the part of other educators as well.

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Andrea Prejean 34:48

So maybe a little personal route here because you've written and you've spoken about a single home visit that changed the course of your professional life, and. For listeners who are meeting you for the first time, would you share that story and how it led you to focus your career on parent and family engagement?

Ah, thanks for that, Andrea. Like everyone, you know, I was a young beginning teacher. I grew up in a rural setting, and I was teaching in an urban setting. So lots of that was new to me. The families were living in ways that were different than the families I grew up with, and so trying to find my way with all of this, I had two sisters in my class, one one year older than the other. Their birthday's just a day apart, so they planned a birthday party, and they said, "Mrs. Pusher, will you come to our birthday party? And that's how my home visits started. So I checked in with my principal, said, "Hey, can I go to this birthday party? And she said, "Of course you can. So off I went to this birthday party. The children lived in a low rental complex close to the school, so I just walked across the field of the school to their home, and and honestly, I'm you know I have to say I don't like telling what I saw or thought when I first arrived there. But I saw a rundown home. I saw there was a hole in the screen, and the cat came out of the screen and jumped down on the ground. And when I stepped inside the house, a closet door had fallen off, and there was things piled all over. It was messy. It was crowded, and so I was a bit, you know, as a young teacher, I was a bit like, "What have I gotten myself into? Should I be here? What's happening? And I mean, two beautiful little girls, and so they were so excited. The kitchen was right, right there off the front entrance, and they wanted me to meet someone. And so their mom was there, and they wanted me to meet this other lady. And what I learned, it was their grandmother. She had ridden a bus for two provinces. So in in Canada, you go from Manitoba to Saskatchewan to Alberta. At that time, I was teaching Alberta. She would have ridden a bus for like a day and a half, two days to get to her granddaughter's party. The other thing I realized when I got there was I was the guest. Grandma and I were the only guests. There were no kids at the party. It was just the two of us. We played board games. We ate cake. We told stories. We laughed. The kids made fun of me because I wasn't as good at the games as they were, and everything about my sense of that family shifted in that moment. What I saw was love. What I saw was relationship. What I saw was deep connections, intergenerational support, and honestly, I left. I'm I'm crying right now as I tell you this. I'm the story. I left that experience asking a lot of questions about who I was, what assumptions I was making, what I didn't know, what I had learned and needed to know, what I didn't know about then my other children's families, and and I decided right in that moment it's not the family's responsibility to teach me who they are. It's my responsibility as a teacher to make that connection and know who they are, and to know their strengths, and to know their knowledge, and to know their connections, and so truly for me, it did change my life and it changed my career. I was probably a maybe a second year teacher at that time, and everything I've done from that point on has been about families, about kids in the context of, of their families. So that, yeah, that was that was a moment I'm just so very thankful about, and and it's it's shaped as I said everything about my career and so many of the concepts that I teach in my own work or they write about my own research. I think about. I can picture those two girls every single time I sit down to do some work in this in this area.

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Andrea Prejean 39:10

Well, I want to thank you for sharing such a personal story. It's so powerful, and we see it here at PTHV so often with teachers after or educators just in general, after they have a home visit, it literally just changes how you see the world and makes you a more reflective educator. And in the long run, that makes you a better teacher, a better person, right? In the long run, and how you see the world. We're moving towards framework release, the playbooks entering its development. You've got a new book coming out with teacher stories, and we love the fact that teacher leaders are part of the writing of that. That that's exciting. What does your vision look like for the next chapter of this work in Saskatchewan and across Canada, if you if you feel like you can comment there,

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Dr. Debbie Pushor 40:03

very much. I'm hoping that this framework is going to create that structure of accountability, but accountability in a positive sense, like positive momentum, excitement, opportunities to move towards a new way of thinking about schooling. Home visits remain woven through everything I do because it's a high impact practice. We know that, and as you and I have just talked about, it's a life changing practice. So, as divisions take up the framework and as the playbook unfolds with that picture of what a systematic infrastructure could look like. Then these relational home visits are still going to be featured practice. Unfortunately, in Canada, beyond our province of Saskatchewan, no one else is yet creating a framework for family engagement the way in which we have. So I do hope that it will be inspiration for other provinces, that it might be a model or perhaps a template that they could use to do some development of their own. The new book, because it is that month-by-month structure, and we've also put in lots of reflective activities, activities teachers can do. I hope that it will reach educators in Saskatchewan, but all beyond in Canada, the U.S. globally, as well. So I think I think there's possibility. I've learned so much from you. I've learned so much from other educators. You know that I've had the opportunity to connect with over the decades, and we're hoping that our work could be that same inspiration for others, also that there's reciprocity as we teach and learn within our family engagement network across the world.

A

Andrea Prejean 41:51

Well, we are coming to the end of our time together, but before I let you go, we ask every podcast guest this question because it sits at the heart of the PTHV model, Debbie. What are your hopes and dreams for the future of family engagement in education?

D

Dr. Debbie Pushor 42:08

My hopes and dreams is that that this work will touch everyone. That every family will enter a classroom, a school, an educational organization where they're given place and voice, that hasn't been the way it's been. And I think back to taking my own oldest son to school. I'd been an educator for 15 years, working with families had become so important to my work. I'm so excited taking my son on the first day, and I got there. Thank you for bringing him. Does he have his indoor shoes? Does he have his backpack? We'll see you at lunchtime. There was no place for me. There was no invitation to linger. No welcoming. I want that to be different. I want that to be different for every single family and every single school everywhere. In the work that I do, I use this idea of walking alongside. So often, I think schools think they are the main game. We are the big deal, and parents need to do what we ask them to support us. I'm trying to turn that on its head and say families educate their children from birth to forever, they're their children's lifelong educators. We, as educators, have the privilege of walking alongside them, so they're not serving us. We are supporting them in that really important work that they have to do, and so that's how I try to frame this as as I think about it, I'd love for a hope and dream would be to have people see themselves in support of families instead of families in support of schools, and and I've used the term gentle revolution. We have a lot of change to make, a lot of things we want to see differently, and change is scary. Sometimes it's overwhelming, but I use the word revolution because if you actually print that word on a piece of paper, e v o l is in there. Read that backwards. It's love. So I want to really upset schools, interrupt schools in ways that really change things, but with love, with gentleness, with respect, both for educators and for parents and families. I think that's where, if we do this work, if we hold this work gently in our hands as we come into relationship with one another, we can make some changes, significant changes that are positive for everyone.

A

Andrea Prejean 44:44

What a gift this conversation has been! You've really given us a window into something remarkable, and a province that decided family engagement deserves a permanent place in its education system, and then did the hard work of making that re. From the share framework to teacher preparation rooted in relational practice, Saskatchewan is showing what is possible when leaders treat families as essential partners. For educators and school leaders listening, the takeaway is simple: you do not have to wait for a federal mandate or a formal course. You can begin with one relationship, one conversation, one home visit, and build from there. Debbie, we look forward to your new book, *Fires of Change: Enhancing Teaching and Learning Through Systemic Parent Engagement*. And just remember to our audience, it offers a month-by-month guide for doing just that. I invite our audience to learn more about Debbie's research and the Parent Engagement Collaborative. You can visit her at debbi.ca, or follow Parent Engagement with Debbie Pusher on Facebook. And I want to thank you for joining us, Debbie. Thank you so much. I really enjoyed talking with you and hearing about your work, and we will see everyone else next time on the PTHV podcast. Everybody, have a lovely day. If this conversation has sparked your own thinking about how to build stronger bridges between families and schools. We invite you to visit our website at pthvp.org. There, you can find research on the impact of family visits, information about our training programs, and stories from the hundreds of schools across the country where educators and families are becoming true partners through parent-teacher home visits.

