

# Moving our Thinking About Family-School Relationships: From Deficit Oriented to Assets-Based

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## Abstract

Deeply held beliefs and assumptions about students and families' impact how school leaders engage in their work. In order to facilitate a genuine appreciation for the strengths each child and family brings to the school community, educational leaders must first recognize how "deficit thinking" (Valencia, 1997) influences their attitudes and beliefs about students and families, particularly students with disability labels and students placed at risk of academic failure. Once cognizant of how these assumptions influence family-school relationships we can move our thinking from a "deficit thinking" perspective to an "assets-oriented" view (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). To this end, the *Moving our Thinking* curriculum module provides participants the opportunity to: 1) recognize patterns of "deficit thinking" within family-school relationships; 2) identify an "assets-oriented" view of family-school relationships; 3) distinguish between parent involvement and parent-school collaboration; and 4) demonstrate specific leadership strategies to increase collaboration between families and school personnel.

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