



## Beyond good intentions: Understanding meaningful partnerships in early childhood

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The subject of relationships between families and schools is usually seen as important in supporting students' academic achievement. This idea manifests in early childhood as 'partnerships' – the presumption that good relationships between parents and educators are not just desirable but inevitable. This assumption assumes a shared set of goals for early education and ignores the often significant differences between those who care for children (young, economically-marginalised women) and those who use childcare (wealthy middle-aged couples). Drawing on parallel semi-structured interviews with both parents and educators, this research examines the taken-for-granted category of partnership, asking whether such an expectation is realistic or achievable. I argue that class and age differences are manifested in the divergent views that emerge from the interview findings, making such hopes dangerous. Rather than beginning from the assumption of shared goals implied in a partnership model, I show that a more productive approach starts from the separate lived realities of both parties, and what they may have in common (concern for the child) and what they usually do not (economic and cultural capitals). Being explicit about these tensions allows for more deliberate attention being paid to points of conflict, allowing for workable local solutions.