A student’s life at school is filled with potential connections (relationships, linkages in learning, behavioral choices, etc). Friendships with peers, relationships with teachers, acknowledgements from administrators, encouragement from coaches are all connections that are essential to making school an enjoyable place to learn. Supportive learning environments help students make positive connections between behavior, effort, skills, and achievement, while also building resilience and the ability to meet challenges successfully.

Connections such as these are vital to our children. Having at least one trustworthy adult in addition to family, whether at school or in the community, can help children overcome challenges and adversity. One friendship is enough to help a child feel accepted at school. Feeling connected to school increases children’s well being and academic achievement and decreases negative risk factors such as truancy and the likelihood of dropping-out. Students who can clearly link their choices and thought process to actions that lead to specific outcomes are better able to make good choices.

School psychologists are in a unique role to facilitate students’ connections at school. We work directly with students providing educational assessments, leading individual and group social skills development sessions, guiding learning strategies and problem solving skills, and helping students develop positive self concepts by linking efforts to achievements. The importance of connections is not limited to students. School psychologists also consult and collaborate with teachers, counselors, aides, administrators, and parents. We provide services such as serving on school problem solving and leadership teams, analyzing and explaining educational data, developing classroom accommodations and modifications, meeting with parents and community members, and helping students transition to post secondary education or adult services after graduation. That is a lot of connections!

Helping our students and schools focus on strengthening positive relationships and increasing positive connections is at the heart of national School Psychology Awareness Week, November 14-18, 2011. The theme, “Every link matters. Make a connection.” is directed to students, but also carries an important message to all adults.

Parents you can help us build and celebrate your children’s positive connections!

- Encourage your child to do homework with a friend or a group of friends.
- Get to know at least two or three parents of your child’s classmates by name.
- Listen more than talk next time your child tells you they have a problem. It shows them you believe in their ability to become good problem solvers.
- Encourage your child to come up with at least three ways to solve problems they run into, and congratulate them for thinking of different ways to solve problems. (Okay, some ideas will be a little grand, but thinking big is a great way to encourage imagination!)
- Take time each day to tell a child, any child, that they are important. Tell them what they think, say, and do matters to everyone around them.
- Link up and connect with your school psychologist and I would love to talk with you about your child and all the ways your school helps all our children make positive lifelong learning and social connections.

Dedicated to Excellence
Cherry Creek Schools