

**Hopes and Fears:**  
**Working with Today's Independent School Parents**  
**Rob Evans and Michael Thompson**

**The Home-school Relationship More Complex Than Ever**

1. Rising tide of anxiety in parents: rapid change, uncertain future, bad pop psychology advice.
2. Schools' anxiety: enrollment worries and parent as customer, emphasis on "partnership"
3. Lack of teacher training in working with adults—and endemic conflict avoidance

**The Basic Toolkit**

1. Key perceptions:
  - a) Parents are sincere and—this is especially important to remember—anxious
  - b) Problems are inevitable and often valuable.
  - c) The educator is the *senior partner* and can apply with parents the very skills that work with students .
2. Key skills
  - a) Active listening
  - b) Asking questions, especially about parents' hopes and fears
  - c) Claiming the child
  - d) Straight talking
    - Frame it, don't fudge it or "sandwich" it
    - Clarity: a topic sentence and the rule of three

**The Advanced Toolkit**

1. Key perception: parents fall into two groups
  - a) 95%, though often more challenging than in the past, are workable
  - b) 5% can't be reasoned with; come in three types:
    - Anxious and Incompetent
    - Unresponsive
    - Intimidators
  - c) This is administrator territory
2. Key skills
  - a) Try not to get defensive. It's business, not personal
  - b) The goal isn't behavior change through insight, it's just plain behavior change
  - c) Don't focus on the student, but on the *impact of the parent's behavior*
  - d) Above all: *limits, limits, limits*