

# PARTNERING WITH MIDDLE SCHOOL FAMILIES

Involving middle school families as active partners can boost students' chances of success, resulting in better attendance and better grades. When families engage from home, even if you never see them in the building, students are more likely to gain the essential support needed for academic achievement and personal happiness. Consider these tips and reminders for engaging with families.

## **Emphasize the Importance of Attendance:**

- Explain to families that attendance is crucial as some activities, like hands-on experiments and group work, cannot be replicated outside of class. These experiences foster relationship building and opportunities to socialize with peers, as well as affect grades.

## **Address Tardiness:**

- Discuss with families how tardiness can make students feel awkward and overly visible. Some students may prefer to miss an entire day rather than arrive late, as many adolescents seek to avoid unwanted attention.

## **Clarify School Policies:**

- Encourage families to check with your school about your "too sick for school" policy to help decide whether to send their student to class.

## **Support for School-Related Anxiety:**

- Work with families to talk to their child about school-related anxiety and seek support if needed. Encourage them to address what they can and feel proud of their efforts.

## **Make sure families have contact information for community and school partners who can help:**

- Families may not know how to reach the counselor in the building or know what mental health services are available in your community.

## **Cultivate Organizational Skills:**

- Advise families to assist their child in cultivating strong organizational skills, which can significantly reduce anxiety for the student.

**Daily Check-Ins:**

- Recommend that families frequently ask their child if they need help with anything in their backpack or if there are important assignments and announcements to discuss. This reminder can help them stay organized.

**Promote Tech-Free Dinners:**

- Suggest that families plan tech-free dinners with their preteens. When parents start a conversation about their day, students are encouraged to share about theirs. Provide examples of questions that can help open communication lines.

**Limit Online Usage:**

- Suggest that families work together to explore alternative activities to limit excessive online usage. Prolonged exposure to TV, video games, or social media can negatively impact adolescents physically, emotionally, and cognitively. Give alternative options for online work and suggestions for free time activities.

**Implement No-Tech Rules:**

- Recommend implementing a no-tech rule before bedtime to improve the student's rest by reducing distractions.

**Highlight the Importance of Sleep:**

- Emphasize that getting 8-10 hours of quality sleep improves perception, performance, and positivity, leading to better cognitive abilities and academic success.

**Encourage Physical Activity:**

- Recommend daily physical exercise or participation in extracurricular activities to promote overall well-being. Include movement in your lessons, if possible.

**Build Empathy and Understanding:**

- Encourage families to reflect on their own transformative experiences and remember the vulnerability and uncertainty of that phase. Remind them that they serve as their child's safe haven and stability, even if the child does not always express it.