

# STARTING THE YEAR RIGHT WITH MIDDLE SCHOOL FAMILIES

Schools that forge relationships with students' families prior to the start of the academic year often experience higher levels of success.

Here are some strategies for collaborating with families at the middle school level:

## EMPHASIZE BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

- Connect with families at Open House, with a beginning of year newsletter and targeted phone calls home. When you have a positive connection before any calls home with academic or behavior problems, families will be more open to work with you.
- Commit to sending positive communications home to three families every week. Committing to three communications per week will help you build relationships with all your students' families without burning out.

## COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY

Communicate early before problems arise. Families are powerful partners in setting expectations for academics and behavior. Engaging them as soon as you notice red flags can prevent crises.

- Work with your middle school teaching team to create a short weekly or monthly newsletter for parents.
- Let families know the best way to contact you or to schedule a conference.
- Share syllabi and grading information with families.
- As an educator, you are an expert on how to be successful in middle school. You can provide new parents of teenagers with information they need to stay calm during this challenging phase of life.

## **EASE PARENTS' MINDS ON HOMEWORK**

- Middle school parents sometimes get stressed about supporting their students with more complicated homework. Be sure to communicate the expectation that students should not need parents to "teach" them the content. Families just need to provide time, space, and encouragement for homework.
- Let families know how to communicate with you if their student is finding the homework too challenging.
- Regularly update grades in your school portal so that families can be aware if their student is falling behind.

## **SHOW APPRECIATION**

Recognizing efforts of families builds trust and strengthens the partnership between school and home. Show appreciation for...

- Partnering with you to help their child attend school regularly to be successful.
- Helping their child be organized, because middle school can be challenging for students to manage at first.
- Their involvement in their child's educational journey.
- Their willingness to keep you informed of any issues with their students.