

Feeling connected to school is a significant advantage for adolescents as they transition to adulthood.

Ten Strategies That Foster Connection to School*

For School Administrators

1. Brainstorm with students, faculty, staff and parents simple changes that could make school a more pleasant place to be.
2. Create policies based on student, family neighborhood strengths and assets.
3. Turn mistakes into learning opportunities rather than failures meriting punishment.
4. Acknowledge and honor accomplishments and all types of competencies (such as helpfulness, good citizenship, most improved performance, volunteerism, participation in decision making, and cessation of negative behavior).
5. Set high standards and challenge students to meet them.
6. Reinforce explicit expectations for positive behavior and academic success.
7. Encourage highly interactive teaching strategies.
8. Create a welcoming environment for all who come to the school.
9. Invite family and community members to take active and regular roles in the daily operation of the school.
10. Create a common vision of success and keep it visible.

For Parents

1. Be a model of respectful, cooperative, positive behavior in your everyday interactions.
2. Participate in school events.
3. Show interest. Be involved in your child's academic activities.
4. Maintain regular contact with your child's teacher.
5. Monitor your child's homework completion and work with him or her on homework assignments that involve family participation.
6. Be present when things go wrong.
7. Meet your children's friends and their parents.
8. Ask school leaders what you can do to support them.
9. Volunteer at school.
10. Nominate effective school leaders for local awards.

For Teachers

1. Help students get to know each other's (and your) strengths.
2. Involves students in planning, problem solving, identifying issues and assessing curriculum in the classroom.
3. Promote cooperation over competition. Post everyone's best work. Offer opportunities for the class to work together to help everyone achieve their level of excellence.
4. Build a strong relationship with each student.
5. Convey attentiveness to students and excitement about learning through nonverbal gestures.
6. Involve all students in chores and responsibilities in the classroom.
7. Integrate concepts of discipline and respect for classmates through instruction.
8. Give students more say in what they will learn.
9. Involve students in developing the criteria by which their work will be assessed and provide guidelines so they clearly understand what's expected of them.
10. Use first person plural (we, us, let's) when presenting classroom activities.

*Based on material published in:

"Protective Schools: Linking Drug Abuse Prevention with Student Success"

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<http://www.drugstats.org>