



## Middle School Family Engagement Partnerships for 2015-2016 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Flamboyant Foundation is pleased to announce opportunities for public schools to engage in **Middle School Family Engagement Partnerships**. Through this partnership, Flamboyant Foundation will support DCPS middle schools to implement family engagement strategies that drive student achievement. The partnership focuses on high impact family engagement strategies that

- **Build trusting relationships** between teachers and families and create a welcoming school environment
- **Engage families as partners in their student’s academic success** through sharing academic information with families and working with them to monitor their child’s progress

Flamboyant Foundation invites DCPS middle schools to submit proposals to enter into this partnership, which will provide intensive support in the form of teacher training, leadership coaching, and resources, to improve family engagement. Additionally schools will receive up to \$30,000 to fund stipends for teachers who conduct home visits, stipends for teachers who lead the work, and implementation of high impact family engagement strategies.

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# Why should you work with us to engage families?

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## Our Approach

Our relationship-building and academic-partnering strategies are quite different from “typical” approaches to family engagement, which tend to focus on getting families to attend events or volunteer at the school. These “typical” approaches are often disconnected from student achievement. In contrast, Flamboyan Foundation defines family engagement as the partnership between educators and families that improves students’ educational outcomes. Specifically, Flamboyan Foundation believes that effective family engagement is

- Individualized for each student and family
- A shared responsibility between families and school staff with particularly important roles for teachers
- Built on a strong foundation of trusting relationships between families and school staff

Cutting across the components of the Middle School Family Engagement Partnership is a commitment to this understanding of family engagement as well as an assets-based approach to engaging families as experts and partners in their child’s learning and development.

## Our Impact

Through a preliminary evaluation conducted by Johns Hopkins University, Flamboyan identified the following impacts on teachers, families, and students in partner schools<sup>1</sup>:

- 100% of principals partnering with Flamboyan Foundation agreed or strongly agreed that the family engagement partnership increased student achievement in their school.
- 97% of parents receiving a home visit agreed or strongly agreed that it improved their relationship with their child’s teacher. 98% of participating teachers said the same about their relationships with families.
- Parents who received family engagement practices were more likely to believe that their involvement in their child’s education made a difference and had more positive perceptions of the school.
- Teachers whose principal made family engagement a top priority were more likely to report that they were confident in their ability to teach all students, were satisfied in their jobs, and had positive beliefs about families.

## About the Flamboyan Foundation

Flamboyan Foundation is a private, family foundation which started in Puerto Rico in 2006 and opened its doors in Washington, D.C. in 2008. Our mission is to improve educational outcomes for children in public and charter schools. Our approach to philanthropy is to play a catalytic role that leverages the foundation’s financial resources, expertise, and influence by partnering with others to solve complex problems in both Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico.

Flamboyan’s D.C. office focuses on family engagement as a key lever in improving student achievement. We believe that

- Every child deserves an excellent education and can achieve at high levels.
- All families care about and want the best for their children.
- Families are assets in supporting student learning.
- Teachers are very important and have a tremendous influence on child outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> Sheldon, S., & Hutchins, D. (2014). The D.C. Family Engagement Partnership: Findings from a Descriptive Evaluation.

# What does the Middle School Family Engagement Partnership look like?

## Overview of Partnership Strategies

Change defines children's middle school years. Adolescents undergo physical changes during puberty. They change socially as their peer group grows more important. And they change intellectually, developing abstract thinking skills. With these changes, adolescents demand more independence and autonomy; however, the guiding hand of a caring parent is equally as important during this time as it was in elementary school. Research confirms that parent engagement in middle and high school positively impacts students' academic achievement, school attendance, high school graduation, and college matriculation.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of adolescent development, the roles that parents play in their child's education also change. In elementary school, parents directly support their child's learning and advocate for their child. Differently, in middle school, parents act more like coaches, encouraging adolescents to take responsibility for their education. Research highlights that impactful types of parental involvement during students' teenage years are (1) communicating high educational expectations, (2) monitoring the child's progress and coaching the child to advocate for him/herself, and (3) guiding the child's future decisions.<sup>3</sup>

Through the Middle School Family Engagement Partnership, schools will implement family engagement strategies that honor adolescents' growing independence and engage families to play the three impactful roles listed above.

**In the first year of the partnership**, teachers will build strong relationships with families, creating a foundation for all future family engagement work. Teachers will also begin academic partnerships with families by consistently sharing academic information so families can communicate high expectations to their child and monitor their progress. Strategies implemented in the first year of the partnership include

- **Home visits:** Teachers develop trusting, one-on-one relationships with students in their homerooms/advisories and their families.
- **Back to School Night:** Families meet all of their child's teachers and learn about their academic classes.
- **Gradebooks:** Teachers digitally track grades and share class specific information using the gradebook. Students and families access this information with their individualized username and use the gradebook to monitor students' progress. See **appendix A** for more information about year one strategies.

### Year One: Measures of Success

During the first year of the partnership, schools will work towards the following measures of success:

- **50%** of students and families receive a home visit from the homeroom/advisory teacher.
- **50%** or more of families attend Back to School Night.
- **80%** of families log on to the gradebook during the year.
- **50%** of families log on to the gradebook at least biweekly.

**Once a school has successfully implemented these initial strategies**, in future years of the partnership, the school will work to deepen their academic partnering by replacing traditional parent-teacher conferences with student-led conferences (SLCs). Through SLCs, students take ownership of their education,

<sup>2</sup> Sanders, M., Epstein, J., & Connors-Tadros, L. (1999). Family Partnerships with High Schools: The Parents' Perspective. Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk, 32.

<sup>3</sup> Kreider, H., Caspe, M., Kennedy, S., & Weiss, H. (2007). Family Involvement in Middle and High School Students' Education. Harvard Family Research Project, 3.

becoming independent, self-reflective learners, and teachers and families partner by co-constructing academic goals with the student. Additionally, schools and/or partnering nonprofits will support families to guide their child’s high school choices by providing them with necessary and timely information about the high school application process. Strategies implemented after the first year of the partnership will include

- **Student-led conferences (SLCs):** Students lead the conversation about their progress. Students, families, and teachers discuss students’ academic progress and develop concrete action steps for all stakeholders to support the adolescents’ growth.
- **Engaging families in high school applications:** Schools will engage families in communicating college and career aspirations to their child, supporting their child through the high school application process, and selecting a high school that is the right fit for their child. See **appendix B** for more information about strategies after the first year of implementation.

Beyond Year One: Measures of Success
<p>Schools will continue to work towards the year one measures of success in addition to the ones below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>50%</b> or more of families attend student-led conferences.</li> <li>• <b>75%</b> of students apply to a non-neighborhood high school.</li> </ul>

### Year One: Funding

To support high quality family engagement work, Flamboyant Foundation will fund practices that align with the year one measures of success:

- **Home visits:** Flamboyant Foundation will compensate eligible DCPS employees for home visits (2 teachers per visit) conducted outside of contractual hours. ET-15 teachers will be paid \$34 per visit, and support staff will be paid \$18 per visit. For example, a school that conducted 200 home visits would receive approximately \$13,600 to pay teachers who completed the visits.
- **Teacher lead stipends:** Teacher leads are champions of family engagement work and help the school leadership manage the day-to-day implementation of the partnership. To compensate the time devoted to improving family engagement, each teacher lead will receive a **\$2,000** stipend. Flamboyant Foundation will fund up to three teacher leads per school (one for each middle school grade level), totaling \$6,000 for teacher lead stipends per school.
- **Family engagement implementation funding:** Flamboyant Foundation will provide partner schools with up to **\$5,000** for funding Back to School Night, gradebooks, school wide incentives, and/or other efforts that support schools in accomplishing the measures of success.

To help sustain this work and allow Flamboyant to fund family engagement at a greater scale, each year partner schools are asked to contribute to the overall costs from their school budgets. To help us determine a reasonable contribution given the challenges of school budgeting, we solicited feedback from 14 principals and have incorporated their suggestions into our recommendations. Flamboyant asks partner schools to contribute about \$1,000 in the first year of the partnership. The contribution will increase incrementally over time but should not exceed 20% of the total cost of the partnership.

## Year One: Calendar

When prioritized and implemented well, these family engagement strategies positively impact how families support their child and, in turn, positively affect student achievement. The year one family engagement strategies listed on page 3 will be implemented with all grade levels in the middle school during the first year of the partnership. In order to provide appropriate supports so that teachers can implement family engagement strategies with quality, school leaders must (1) set clear, realistic, and measurable expectations for teachers about when and how they engage families and (2) devote the following time to implement family engagement strategies.

	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sept</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>		
<b>Partnership Launch</b>	1.5 hr planning meeting with Flamboyant coach  1 hr all-staff partnership launch meeting		2 hr planning meeting with Flamboyant coach													
<b>Coaching Meetings</b>					1 hr of coaching meetings biweekly with Flamboyant coach											
<b>Grade Level Meetings</b>					1-2 hr of grade level meetings devoted to family engagement monthly											
<b>Home Visits</b>			3 hr for HV training													
			1 hr per home visit conducted													
<b>Gradebook</b>					3 hr for gradebook training		1 hr weekly for updating the gradebook								30 min weekly for students to log on to Engrade in homeroom/advisory	
<b>Back to School Night</b>			1 hr for Back to School Night planning		2 hr Back to School Night											
<b>Total Commitment</b>	<b>Principal:</b> at least 24 hours annually				<b>School Leadership Team:</b> at least 24 hours annually				<b>Teachers:</b> at least 70 hours annually							

## How do I apply?

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### Selection Criteria

Schools interested in improving their family engagement by developing partnerships between educators and families can apply by completing Part 1 of the application on page 7. Throughout the application process, Flamboyant and the school will evaluate the school's readiness to participate in the Middle School Family Engagement Partnership. Schools will be chosen as partners based on the following criteria:

- Is a D.C. public middle school
- Has a desire to make family engagement a school priority over the next few years
- Has strong leadership from the school principal and administrative team, with success in whole-school change efforts
- Has in place or is willing to put in place the prerequisite structures listed below

The structure of middle schools can be a barrier to family engagement. Middle schools are large, complex school communities where teachers instruct many students. This makes relationship-building between parents and teachers difficult and poses challenges to regular communication with families. To overcome these challenges, middle schools must act strategically and put structures in place to facilitate family engagement. Below are **prerequisite structures** for schools participating in the Middle School Family Engagement Partnership:

- **Homeroom or advisory:** Homeroom/advisory assigns a small cohort of students to a teacher. The homeroom/advisory teacher is the students' point person at school and connects the school community to their families. Home visits are facilitated by this teacher. Therefore, rosters should be as small as possible with no more than 15 students assigned to a teacher. Homerooms/advisories should meet at least once a week and be built into the school's master schedule.
- **Weekly grade level meetings:** Grade level meetings allow teachers, who instruct the same group of students, time to collaborate, reflect on data, share information about students and academic classes, and implement family engagement strategies. Schools must provide grade levels at least 60 minutes weekly to meet. Content teachers and homeroom/advisory teachers who instruct the same students must sit on the same grade level team and be present at all meetings.

### Application Timeline

Middle School Family Engagement Partnership is released.	March 27 <sup>th</sup>
Principal completes and submits part 1 of the application to Jacqueline Tuke at <a href="mailto:jtuke@flamboyantfoundation.org">jtuke@flamboyantfoundation.org</a> .	due April 24 <sup>th</sup> by 5:00pm
Schools are notified about application status and next steps.	May 1 <sup>st</sup>
Finalist schools schedule a school visit and interview with the principal and administrative team.	due May 5 <sup>th</sup> by 5:00pm
Flamboyant Foundation confirms interview time with finalist schools and sends part two of the application.	May 6 <sup>th</sup>
Principal and administrative team participate in a 60 minute interview at the school with Flamboyant Foundation.	between May 8 <sup>th</sup> and May 21 <sup>st</sup>
Selected schools are notified and schedule a partnership launch meeting with Flamboyant Foundation.	May 22 <sup>nd</sup>

## Application Process

**Part 1:** Please submit the following by **5:00pm** on **April 24<sup>th</sup>** to Jacqueline Tuke at [jtuke@flamboyanfoundation.org](mailto:jtuke@flamboyanfoundation.org).

**Basic school information:** Please provide the school's name, the principal's name and his/her email address and phone number, the number of students the school serves, and the number of teachers at the school. Beyond this demographic information, describe the school's goals/priorities for school year 2015-2016.

**Short response questions:** Please answer the following questions in no more than 2 pages:

1. Why does your school want to make family engagement a focus over the next several years? How does family engagement connect to your school's priorities? What do you hope to accomplish through your family engagement efforts?
2. What are your school's primary family engagement strategies? Have they been successful? How do you know? Please include qualitative and/or quantitative evidence.
3. Provide an example of a change effort in your school. How did you roll out this new initiative and invest staff? What did you do to support your staff and hold them accountable for the change you wanted to see? What were your lessons learned and results from this effort?

**Evidence of prerequisite structures:** Please submit evidence that your school has or plans to introduce (1) homerooms/advisories that meet at least once a week and (2) weekly grade level meetings. Evidence could include the school's master schedule, homeroom/advisory rosters, grade level meeting agendas, or a narrative that describes these structures with an explanation of how they operate. If you don't currently have these structures but plan to in the upcoming school year, you can describe the planned implementation of homerooms/advisories and grade level meetings for school year 2015-2016.

**Part 2:** Schools who advance to the finalist stage of the selection process will complete part 2 of the application.

**Participate in a 60 minute interview at the school:** The principal and the school's administrative team will participate in a 60 minute interview with Flamboyan Foundation.

**Host a site visit:** Based on the artifacts submitted during part 1 of the application process, Flamboyan will observe either a homeroom/advisory or a grade level meeting prior to the interview. The homeroom/advisory or grade level meeting will be co-observed with the principal and discussed during the 60 minute interview.

**Submit a draft calendar for school year 2015-2016:** Implementing high quality family engagement is a significant lift. Page 5 outlines the time required to implement high impact family engagement strategies well. Please submit a draft master calendar for school year 2015-2016 that includes time blocked for family engagement. We understand this calendar is subject to change as schools receive additional information from DCPS over the summer and we will support schools who are selected into the partnership to revise it as needed. The 2015-2016 calendar will be submitted to Flamboyan Foundation 24 hours before the scheduled interview.

## Appendix A

### YEAR ONE: Family Engagement Strategies

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#### Measures of Success

##### **Relationship Building:**

- 50% of students and families receive a home visit from the homeroom/advisory teacher.
- 50% or more of families attend Back to School Night.

##### **Academic Partnering:**

- 80% of families log on to the gradebook during the year.
- 50% of families log on to the gradebook at least biweekly.

### Home Visits

In order for educators to partner effectively with families, they must have positive, trusting relationships with them. This is particularly true in contexts where families are distrustful or disengaged from the school. During a home visit, teachers, students, and parents come together as equal partners to form a trusting relationship, which becomes the basis for collaboration to support student learning. The relationship-building model of home visiting supported by Flamboyan Foundation was created by the Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) in Sacramento, California.

Evaluations of the PTHVP show that visits have increased parental involvement in schools, improved teacher-parent relationships, and positively impacted students' academic achievement. An evaluation conducted in 2007 found that twelfth grade students at Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento who received a home visit passed their exit exams and graduated at higher rates than students who did not. The evaluation also examined the impacts of home visits conducted at key times, during the transition to middle school and before and after high school exit exams. The evaluation concluded that home visits at these key moments increased academic performance for middle and high school students.<sup>4</sup> Home visits, especially those conducted in sixth grade before the transition to middle school, are critical not only to form relationships between teachers, parents, and students but also for setting families and students up for academic success.

#### ***What it looks like?***

- Homeroom/advisory teachers visit students on their roster.
- Students and families are present at the home visit.
- Homeroom/advisory teachers get to know students and families, ask about their hopes and dreams for the future, introduce the gradebook to families, and discuss communication preferences and norms.
- Homeroom/advisory teachers log home visits and record learning using the family engagement database (<http://www.familyengagementdata.org/>).
- Homeroom/advisory teachers share what they learned on the visit with the grade level.

#### ***Core Components***

- 1. The purpose of home visits is to build relationships.** The focus of home visits is to meet and learn about students and their families and to put teachers and parents on equal footing as partners to support the child. Home visits are not the time to communicate school wide expectations like dress

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<sup>4</sup> Tuss, P. (2007). Evaluation of the CAHSEE Home Visit Pilot Project.

code, homework policies, and behavior management systems. Unlike expectation-setting home visits or disciplinary visits, relationship-building home visits create trust and respect between teachers, parents, and students.

- 2. Teachers visit students and their families on their homeroom/advisory roster.** Studies show that students who feel connected to a member of the school staff have better attendance and higher grades in school.<sup>5</sup> Forming a relationship between homeroom/advisory teachers, parents, and students at the beginning of the year establishes this one-on-one connection and promotes student success.
- 3. Teachers share what they learned about the student and family with the grade level.** Homeroom/advisory teachers report the key learnings from the home visit to the grade level within a month of the visit. This allows other teachers to learn about families and students so that they can better engage families and instruct students.
- 4. Home visits are not conducted on school grounds.** When teachers meet with families outside of school, teachers break down families' mistrust and uncertainty about schools. Furthermore, teachers learn more about students' backgrounds, interests, and life experiences, which they can draw on to improve their teaching, when they meet them in the home.
- 5. Home visits are voluntary for teachers and parents.** In order to build strong, trusting relationships, both teachers and parents must feel respected and valued. Forcing families to host teachers in their home doesn't build respect. Neither does forcing teachers to visit families when they don't want to do so.
- 6. Home visits are scheduled in advance and conducted in pairs.** Scheduling in advance is a sign of respect and shows that teachers value parents' time. Furthermore, scheduling in advance and conducting visits with a partner ensure teachers will be comfortable and safe.

## **Highly Effective Back to School Night**

While Back to School Night is a required tradition in schools, the way schools conduct Back to School Night varies widely, and schools see mixed results. Flamboyan will work with schools to leverage Back to School Night to initiate relationships between families and all of their child's teachers. A highly effective Back to School Night not only builds relationships but also provides the family with valuable information about school wide expectations, the student's academic classes, and resources available to students and families.

### ***What it looks like?***

- Families and students attend Back to School Night.
- Families and students begin Back to School Night in their homeroom/advisory teacher's classroom where the teacher welcomes families, gets families logged on to Engrade, and explains the purpose of homeroom/advisory.
- Families and students follow the student's schedule and meet all of their child's content teachers.
- In each content classroom, teachers introduce themselves, overview their class, describe class goals, show examples of student work, and highlight resources available to families on Engrade. Content teachers also provide their contact information and set expectations for teacher-parent communication.

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<sup>5</sup> Brown, D.F. (2001). Value of Advisory Sessions for Urban Young Adolescents. *Middle School Journal*. Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 14-22

## **Core Components**

- 1. Teachers individually invite families and students to Back to School Night.** Families are more likely to attend school events when they are personally invited. During a welcome phone call or home visit, homeroom/advisory teachers can invite families to attend Back to School and explain the benefits of attendance.
- 2. Families meet each of their child's content teachers.** On the home visit, families deeply and intentionally get to know their child's homeroom/advisory teacher. Back to School Night offers families the opportunity to get to know all of their child's teachers and learn about each of their classes.
- 3. Teachers overview their class and showcase student work to help families understand the grade level expectations.** Teachers should explain class goals and what students will be learning in the class throughout the year. Furthermore, teachers should highlight examples of student work that meet grade level expectations to help families understand academic rigor in the grade. This empowers families to communicate high expectations for their child's work at home.
- 4. Schools use Back to School Night to help families log on to the gradebook and navigate the site.** At Back to School Night, schools can share families' login information for Engrade. A best practice at schools with high parent gradebook usage is to have families log on and follow the teacher through a demo about how to navigate the site. One school with high parent usage opened their computer lab during Back to School Night for parent gradebook trainings to show families resources available on the gradebook and highlight information that parents should regularly check.

## **Gradebook Communication**

By effectively using gradebooks, teachers can provide families with real time information about students' grades and classes. A yearlong experiment in a Los Angeles K-12 school found that providing parents with additional information about grades and missing assignments impacted parents' perspectives of how their child was performing in school, helped parents more effectively motivate their child, and improved GPAs and math standardized test scores for high school students.<sup>6</sup> Access to the gradebook allows families to communicate high expectations for their child and monitor academic progress.

### ***What it looks like?***

- Content teachers update gradebooks weekly and use the digital calendar and messaging function to share class specific information with families.
- Homeroom/advisory teachers set an expectation around gradebooks and help families log on to the gradebook on the home visit.
- Schools target at-risk students' families by having homeroom/advisory teachers individually follow up with them, sharing gradebook updates and student progress.
- Schools promote and publicize gradebooks, especially at Back to School Night, so that all families have their login information at the start of the school year.
- Schools communicate in writing at least once about gradebooks.
- Schools identify a point of contact for families regarding gradebook technical concerns. Schools actively communicate to families who they should contact with other concerns.

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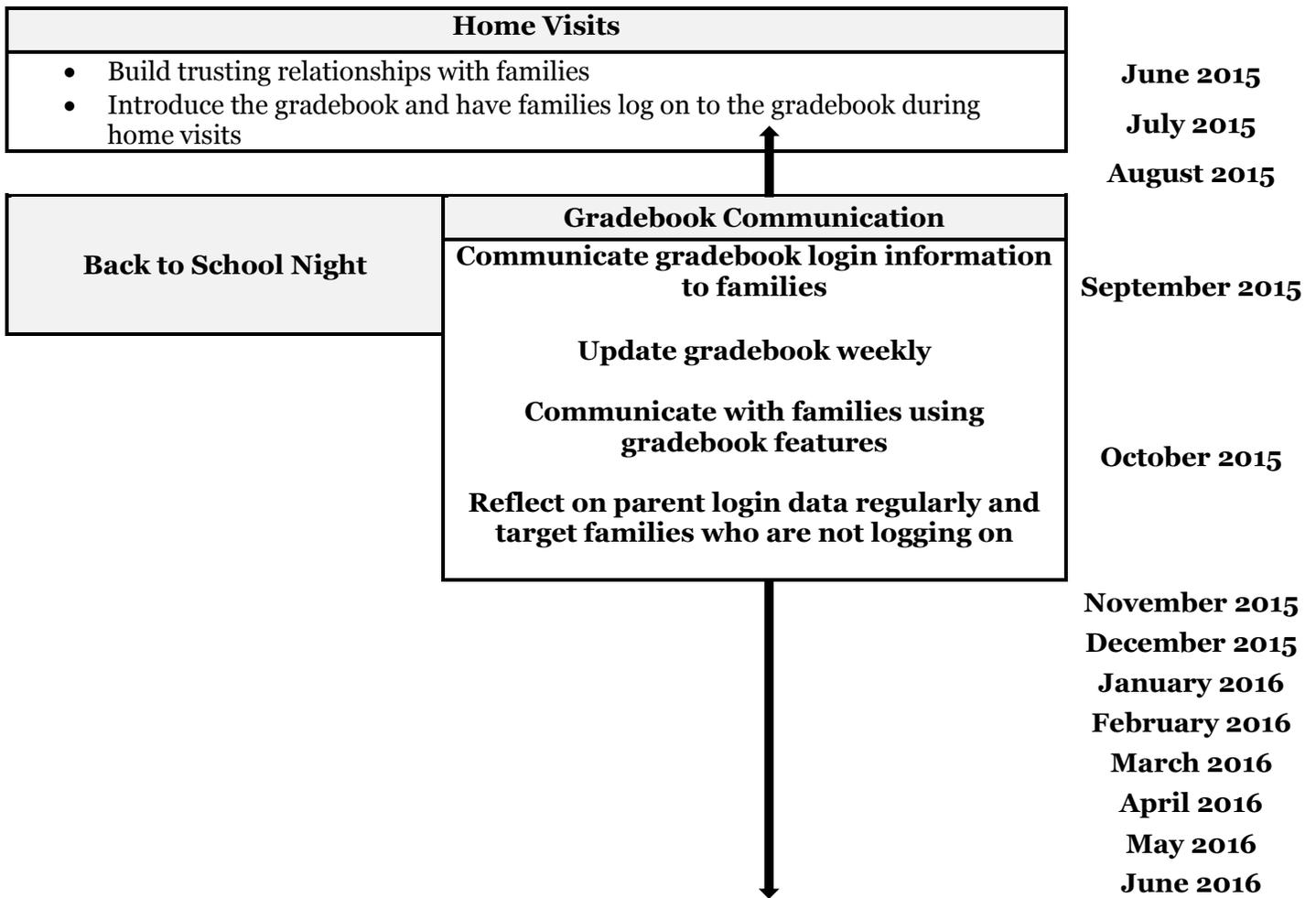
<sup>6</sup> Bergman, P. (2013). Parent-Child Information Frictions and Human Capital Investment: Evidence from a Field Experiment. Teachers College, Columbia University.

- Schools set up help desks for the gradebook at all school events.

**Core Components**

- 1. Communication is frequent.** Through the gradebook, teachers can provide timely, actionable information to families about student progress. With weekly grade updates, parents are able to effectively monitor progress and communicate high expectations to their child. A frequently updated gradebook makes what is happening in the classroom transparent to the family.
- 2. Communication is academically-focused.** Communication about student learning and progress leads to student success. In a review of 51 studies on family engagement, researchers found a positive association between parental support for learning at home and student achievement.<sup>7</sup> Gradebooks provide families with the necessary academic information to monitor and support learning at home.

**Middle School Family Engagement Strategies: Year One at a Glance**



<sup>7</sup> Henderson, A., Mapp, K., Johnson, V., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*. New York: The New Press. Henderson, A. & Mapp, K. (2002)

## Appendix B

### BEYOND YEAR ONE: Family Engagement Strategies

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#### Measures of Success

Year one measures of success plus:

- 50% or more of families attend student-led conferences.
- 75% of students apply to a non-neighborhood high school.

#### Student-led Conferences

Student-led conferences (SLCs) are an opportunity for students, families, and teachers to discuss students' academic progress and develop concrete action steps for all stakeholders to support them. SLCs replace traditional parent-teacher conferences and are led by the student, rather than the teacher. In addition to engaging parents in the academic progress of their child, SLCs allow older students to reflect on their academic performance, set goals, and advocate for the support that they need to meet these goals. This empowers secondary students to take more ownership of their education.

In 2004, a research study investigated the impact of SLCs at four middle schools in Washington, Texas, California, and Oregon. At each of these schools, SLCs replaced traditional parent-teacher conferences. After at least two years of implementation, the study found that<sup>8</sup>

- All participating schools reported improved state standardized test scores after implementing SLCs.
- All four schools reported a decline in disciplinary problems.
- Teachers reported that they planned lessons and units more purposefully.
- Parent participation in SLCs increased to a 92% minimum.
- The schools reported a positive school environment and diffused parent-teacher conflict.
- Over 94% of students reported that they revised and edited their work. 58% of the students reported that they always did this, and 36% said that they did this as a result of participating in SLCs.
- Over 90% of students reported that they set goals to improve their performance. 49% reported that they always did this, and 43% said that they did this as a result of SLCs.

#### What it looks like?

- Students log on to the gradebook and reflect on their grades weekly in homeroom/advisory.
- At the end of the quarter, students reflect on their quarterly progress. Students reflect on their progress (1) by examining category averages on grade reports and using the list of assignments to diagnose strengths and weaknesses or (2) by evaluating their mastery of priority standards and using an aligned, summative assessment to explain strengths and areas for growth. Additionally, students reflect on student performance data such as benchmark assessment scores, attendance, and/or behavioral data. Based on this information, students identify a goal for the upcoming quarter and determine action steps to accomplish the goal.
- Students organize these reflections in a portfolio.
- Students write a script for their conference and practice the conference with peers and teachers.
- Students present their portfolio during a 20 minute conference with their family and homeroom/advisory teacher.
- Prior to conferences, teachers discuss class specific information and student progress. After conferences, teachers share students' goals and action steps during grade level meetings.

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<sup>8</sup> Tuinstra, C., & Hiatt-Michael, D. (2004). Student-Led Parent Conferences in Middle Schools. *School Community Journal*, 14(1), 59-80.

## **Core Components**

- 1. Students are explicitly taught how to analyze and reflect upon their academic performance.** Reflection must be a habit for middle school students that is honed through explicit teaching, modeling, and multiple opportunities for practice. Building students' reflective thinking will produce thoughtful SLCs.
- 2. Homeroom/advisory and content teachers have open and frequent communication.** In the conference, the homeroom/advisory teacher will represent the grade level to the family. As a result, teachers must communicate weekly about student progress and the teaching in their classes so that homeroom/advisory teachers are well prepared. After conferences, the team must share student goals and next steps so all teachers can hold students accountable to their plans for academic improvement.
- 3. Individualized communication from the school and students invites families to SLCs.** Schools in their first and second years of SLC implementation reported improved parent attendance at conferences when families were individually invited through personalized invitations and reminder calls/texts.

## **Engaging families in high school applications**

Throughout students' educational career, families play an important role in setting high expectations for students and guiding their educational decisions to and through college and postsecondary success. Research shows that this role becomes increasingly critical during students' middle school years, when students are making important decisions about high school and academics which will impact their readiness for college.<sup>9</sup> Using a combination of relationship-building and academic-partnering strategies, middle schools and partnering nonprofits will engage families in three key activities that will influence their child's future success:

- Communicating college and career aspirations
- Supporting their child through the high school application process
- Selecting a high school that is the right fit for their child.

These strategies build on existing family engagement practices and structures that partner schools have in place, including home visits and SLCs.

### **What it looks like?**

- **Home visit:** The summer before students enter eighth grade, teachers conduct a home visit with students and families. During this visit, teachers
  - Explicitly ask about students' career and college aspirations as well as students' and families' interest and knowledge about different high school options related to these aspirations
  - Share the expectation that each student will apply to at least one non-neighborhood high school so they have at least two high school options
  - Invite families to high school workshops that will take place during the year
- **High school fair:** Research confirms that parents need to learn about high schools' academic offerings during middle school in order to put their child on a college-going track.<sup>10</sup> In October, families and eighth grade students will attend a high school fair, where they will have an opportunity to hear from and meet with administrative, teacher, and student representatives from D.C. high schools, including public, specialty, and charter schools. The school will provide families and students with criteria and guiding questions that they can discuss together to evaluate their high school options.

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<sup>9</sup> Adelman, C. (1999). *Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment*. Washington, DC: The National Institute on Postsecondary Education, Libraries, and Lifelong Learning.

<sup>10</sup> Sil, S. (2007). "Parent-School Partnerships: Forked Roads to College Access." In *The School Community Journal*, Vol. 17: No. 1, 115.

- **High school application workshop:** In January, families and students will attend a high school application workshop. During this workshop, families will learn the major steps and deadlines in the high school application process and have an opportunity to conference with their child about the materials students have been working on for these applications.
- **High school decision conference:** During the last SLC of the year, students, families, and their homeroom/advisory teacher will review students' high school options and discuss their final high school decision. The teacher, family, and student will complete a summer action plan about what they can do during summer to ensure that the student enrolls in and attends the selected high school.
- **Summer readiness phone call:** Homeroom/advisory teachers will call students and families in their homeroom/advisory in early August to check in on progress toward the action plan and assess if students need additional support enrolling in high school.

### *Core Components*

1. **Homeroom/advisory curriculum includes lessons on the relationship between high school preparedness and college readiness as well as the technical aspects of preparing for, applying to, and choosing a high school.** During homeroom/advisory, students learn about how their choices in middle and high school impact their college and career aspirations. Students also identify high school options that would be a good fit, create a competitive application to those schools, meet all relevant application deadlines, and make an informed high school choice.
2. **There is dedicated class time to prepare high school application materials.** To ensure that students have time to apply to a non-neighborhood high school, homeroom/advisory or other class time (English, specials, etc.) must be devoted to assisting students with completing their application materials, registering for necessary tests, and practicing for interviews.
3. **Individualized communication from the school and students invites families to the high school fair, application workshop, and SLCs.** As previously mentioned, schools with strong attendance at school events report that each family is individually invited to the school.

**Middle School Family Engagement Partnership Strategies: Beyond Year One at a Glance**

<b>Home Visits</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trusting relationships with families</li> <li>• Introduce the gradebook and have families log on to it during the home visit</li> </ul>			<p><b>June 2015</b>  <b>July 2015</b>  <b>August 2015</b></p>
<b>Back to School Night</b>	<b>Gradebook Communication</b>	<b>SLCs</b>	<b>September 2015</b>
	<p><b>Update gradebook weekly</b></p> <p><b>Communicate gradebook login information to families</b></p> <p><b>Communicate with families using gradebook features</b></p> <p><b>Reflect on parent login data regularly and target families who are not logging on</b></p>	<p><b>Weekly Reflection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students log on the gradebook weekly</li> <li>• Explicitly teach students to reflect on their grades and progress</li> </ul>	
<b>Guiding HS Choices</b>			
<b>HS Fair</b>		<p><b>Portfolio Preparation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite parents and schedule conferences</li> <li>• Reflect with students on progress and benchmark data</li> <li>• Construct the portfolio</li> </ul> <p><b>Conference Preparation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice SLCs with students</li> <li>• Conduct SLCs</li> <li>• Record attendance</li> <li>• Debrief SLCs and discuss SLC outcomes with grade level team</li> </ul>	<p><b>October 2015</b></p> <p><b>November 2015</b></p>
<b>HS Application Workshop</b>		<p><b>Weekly Reflection</b></p> <p><b>Portfolio Preparation</b></p> <p><b>Conference Preparation</b></p>	<p><b>December 2015</b></p> <p><b>January 2016</b></p> <p><b>February 2016</b></p>
<b>HS Decision Conference</b>		<p><b>Weekly Reflection</b></p> <p><b>Portfolio Preparation</b></p> <p><b>Conference Preparation</b></p>	<p><b>March 2016</b></p> <p><b>April 2016</b></p> <p><b>May 2016</b></p>
<b>HS Summer Readiness Call</b>			<b>June 2016</b>

