

ENGAGING
MIDDLE
GROUND

Partnering with families for
success in the middle grades



Ohio Statewide

Family Engagement Center

at The Ohio State University

Mia's story



Our Goals

- ✓ **To promote effective collaboration between middle schools and families.**
 - ✓ By identifying effective family engagement strategies for the middle school age.
 - ✓ By applying effective middle school family engagement strategies.



*What makes **engaging families of adolescents** different?*

- Adolescents have several teachers - it is harder for families and teachers to develop relationships with each other.
- Adolescents also desire more independence.
- They are still developing their own sense of confidence.

Research demonstrates that home-based family engagement that is aimed at supporting adolescents' growing autonomy and confidence, while also focused on building adolescents' academic skills, is most beneficial during this stage.





Mia's scenario: academic skills

As we explore middle school family engagement strategies, consider how they would apply to Mia's scenario.

Strategy #1:

Promote awareness of the developmental needs of early adolescents.



OPPORTUNITIES TEACHERS & COUNSELORS CAN USE:

- Provide opportunities in the classroom for autonomy development by encouraging participation in decision-making and self-regulation.
- Explain to families how participation in family decision-making encourages healthy opportunities to practice autonomy.
- Host family-support meetings, webinars, or other online or in-person forums and share ideas in accessible ways.
- Remember that families are early adolescents' first and most enduring teachers.



Strategy #2:

Provide families with information about how to navigate middle school.



OPPORTUNITIES TEACHERS & COUNSELORS CAN USE:

- Develop a consistent system for academic organization and share it with students and their families.
- Introduce study skills and self-regulation skills that students can use at home and share these with families.
- Tell families how you can be reached for questions.
- Communicate learning topics with families and link what is being learned in the classroom with future careers.



Strategy #3: Emphasize a growth mindset.



OPPORTUNITIES TEACHERS & COUNSELORS CAN USE:

- Teach students to treat mistakes as opportunities to grow, helping them to compare their initial performance to their performance after practice.
- Share tips with families and collaborate on encouraging a growth mindset during homework time.
- Adopt mastery-based grading practices and explain these to families. Allow early adolescents to revise and resubmit work until they hit a high bar.



Strategy #4: Provide actionable and specific improvement messages.

OPPORTUNITIES TEACHERS & COUNSELORS CAN USE:

- Focus messages to families on concrete, actionable topics such as missed assignments and study needs.
- Be clear about providing action steps for students and families when addressing behavior concerns.
- Survey families at the beginning of the year to determine each family's preferred method and time of communication.
- Be proactive and address concerns when they are small and resolvable.
- Contact all families on a regular basis with specific improvement messages.



Strategy #5: Encourage families to approach homework with positivity.

OPPORTUNITIES TEACHERS & COUNSELORS CAN USE:

- Design homework to be enjoyable and doable.
- Teach early adolescents strategies to calm down when anxious or frustrated and share these with families.
- Be clear about your homework expectations: purpose, amount, frequency, and how it will be communicated.
- Let families know how you can be reached for questions.
- Invite feedback from families about how the homework process is going at home.



Mia's scenario: academic skills



1. Promote awareness of the developmental needs of early adolescents.
2. Provide families with information about how to navigate middle school.
3. Emphasize a growth mindset.
4. Provide actionable and specific improvement messages.
5. Encourage families to approach homework with positivity.

What strategies would apply?



Mia's scenario: social skills

As we explore middle school family engagement strategies, consider how they would apply to Mia's scenario.

Strategy #6:

Partner to provide age-appropriate and supportive routines and structures.

OPPORTUNITIES TEACHERS & COUNSELORS CAN USE:

- Explain to parents why collaborative rule-setting is supportive of early adolescents' developmental needs.
- Build trusting relationships with the early adolescents in your school and their families.
- Provide families with information about current social media platforms early adolescents are using and ways families can monitor their early adolescents' online behavior.
- Raise awareness with families about typical risky behaviors and how to have conversations about peer pressure.



Strategy #7:

Collaborate to create a sense of belonging.



OPPORTUNITIES TEACHERS & COUNSELORS CAN USE:

- Share about Positive Childhood Experiences and how these benefit early adolescents now and in the future.
- Foster a sense of belonging at school through clubs and lunch groups to make sure that all students feel that they belong.
- Collaborate with families to ensure that early adolescents are developing healthy friendships.
- Be an advocate for early adolescents you work with and let their families know you are available as a supportive adult outside of the home.



Strategy #8: Communicate and model confidence.

OPPORTUNITIES TEACHERS & COUNSELORS CAN USE:

- Brainstorm with families how to provide leadership opportunities for early adolescents at school and at home.
- Share tips for how early adolescents can practice the skills they are learning at school in their home and community.
- Implement student-led conferences.
- Encourage early adolescents to reflect on their graded work.
- Provide specific and positive feedback on assessments.
- Connect choices and outcomes. Treat mistakes as an opportunity for learning.



Strategy #9: Value home-based involvement.

OPPORTUNITIES TEACHERS & COUNSELORS CAN USE:

- Tell families about the value of home-based involvement and express appreciation for their sometimes-unseen efforts.
- Communicate to families what they need to know to support learning.
- When speaking to colleagues, highlight the importance of developmentally-appropriate middle school family engagement.
- Celebrate early adolescents' achievements with families—as partners in launching success.



Mia's scenario: social skills



1. Promote awareness of the developmental needs of early adolescents.
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3. Emphasize a growth mindset.
4. Provide actionable and specific improvement messages.
5. Encourage families to approach homework with positivity.
6. Partner to provide age-appropriate and supportive routines and structures.
7. Collaborate to create a sense of belonging.
8. Communicate and model confidence.
9. Value home-based involvement.

What strategies would apply?



MIDDLE GROUND

Family engagement for success in the middle grades

<https://go.osu.edu/ms-fam-engage>

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
CENTER ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT

Partnering with Families for the Middle School Transition

Research-based Strategies for Middle-Level Educators

Developed by the Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center
Hedley F. Bachman, Eric M. Anderson, Brett E. Zyzanski, and Barbara J. Boone



Middle School Transition Tip #1

Support your middle schooler's growing independence.



I have confidence you can do this.



Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center
at The Ohio State University

Launching Your Middle Schooler to Success



Support your middle schooler's growing independence.

- Let your middle schooler have a say in family decisions.
- Middle schoolers have opinions! Be open to listening to them.
- Middle schoolers need rules, but they also have enough experience to help set them.

Encourage a growth mindset.

- Has your middle schooler worked hard on a school assignment? Value effort over results.
- That means an opportunity for learning. If everything is easy, there is no growth.
- Encourage your middle schooler to solve problems on their own.

Teach your middle schooler how to be a strong student.

- Education is not easy! Connect schoolwork to current events and future goals.
- Talk about learning/teach strategies like breaking up tasks and time management.
- What about the Blackboard Book List? Check in with your middle schooler for missing work.
- Everyone needs help sometimes. Tell your middle schooler it's okay to ask for help.

Stay positive during homework time.

- Homework can be tough on everyone other than you. Keep the mood fun and loving.
- Show that you care. Listen for the root of the problem and help them focus on solutions.
- Don't wait until frustration is a fire. Talk about how to calm down when things get tough.

Be aware without being too nosy.

- Ask for information about activities and unstructured time.
- Show your middle schooler that they can trust you. You'll be more likely to be kept in the loop.
- Best news? When your middle schooler opens up to you, try not to react negatively.

Build structure together.

- Rules, middle schoolers still need them. The best rules are easy to understand and consistent.
- Rules will sometimes be broken. Work together to create consequences that make sense.
- What's the point? Talk about why the rules are important for your middle schooler.

Provide emotional support.

- Be available to lots of kisses to give security and comfort.
- Be a cheerleader. Tell your middle schooler how great they are!
- It's okay to be a little needy. Middle schoolers need you! (J)
- Your middle schooler is growing up fast! Notice and celebrate all the changes.

Learn more at ohiofamilyengagement.osu.edu



Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center
News and Guidance — at The Ohio State University

Tailoring Family Engagement For the Middle School Years

Issue 16, February 3, 2021

Tailoring Family Engagement Practices for the Middle School Years

"Parental involvement during middle school that creates an understanding about the purposes, goals, and meaning of academic performance communicates expectations about achievement, and provides strategies that students can effectively use (i.e., academic socialization) has the strongest positive relation with achievement." —Ved & Spence, 2008, p. 738

What makes family engagement at the middle school level unique? Early adolescents are growing and changing, and the school context is, in many ways, more complex for families to navigate. The Middle Ground Project at the Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center seeks to bring research to reality through professional learning opportunities, practical strategies for teachers, and helpful tips for families so that all middle schoolers can benefit from strong family-school partnerships.

Issue 16, February 3, 2021





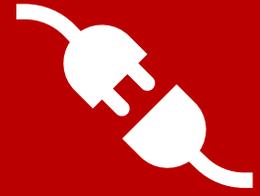
Aspire

What did you learn that you want to adopt as a goal in your work?



Build

What steps would it take to get to that goal?



Connect

What resources and people will help support you?

Directions: go.osu.edu/ABCprotocol or scan -->



Thank you for joining us!

OhioFamiliesEngage.osu.edu



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