

# SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

All schools that develop comprehensive partnership programs use the framework of six types of involvement, establish an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), and write a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships linked to school improvement goals. Middle and high schools also should consider the following guidelines.

## **Link Partnerships to School Improvement Goals**

Partnership programs in middle and high schools must be goal oriented. There are many age-appropriate and context-specific goals to choose from, including improving students' writing, enhancing science skills, increasing attendance, reducing bullying, improving health, planning for postsecondary education, and developing a welcoming school environment. Use Form G—Goals to write the One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships and to evaluate progress.

## **Focus on Transition Years**

Schools that emphasize family involvement for incoming students and their families are more likely to sustain school-family-community partnerships across the middle and high school years. For example, a high school that is just beginning its work on partnerships may want to focus on new activities for involving ninth graders' families and add activities for another grade level each year.

## **Promote Early Postsecondary Planning**

Early and consistent emphases on postsecondary planning will ensure that more students set and reach goals to attend college or prepare for training or work after high school. Middle and high schools' ATPs should create a sequence of information and activities from Grade 6 to 12 to help students and families set long-term education goals, identify academic and financial requirements, and take action to attain the goals. Partnership activities may include workshops, informative flyers, articles in newsletters, interactive homework on setting goals for education and careers, field trips, panel discussions with alumni, and other targeted activities.

## **Actively Involve Students**

Students are the main actors in their own education. Students need to be involved in school, family, and community partnership activities by delivering and interpreting information to and from their families and by providing ideas and reactions for improving involvement activities. In high schools, one or two students must be members of the ATP. Adolescents need to know that their schools and families are working together to help students succeed in school. Ironically, studies indicate that adolescents develop greater independence when their parents are knowledgeable partners in their education.

## **Reach Out to Families**

Just about all parents of middle and high school students want to know how to help their children at home and how to help them succeed at school. Studies confirm that adolescents' families need and want more and better information and guidance from middle and high schools. Studies also show that when schools implement well-planned practices of partnership, more families become involved in those activities.

## **Expand Teachers' Roles Gradually**

Because many middle and high school teachers were trained as academic specialists, they may not be aware of how family and community involvement helps adolescents succeed. ATPs may start by implementing partnership activities that produce important and visible results for students and the school. ATPs may encourage teachers who already conduct partnership activities to share their success stories and recruit colleagues to implement similar activities.